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THE

ENTIRE WORKS

OF THE

REV. CHARLES SIMEON, M.A.

WITH COPIOUS INDEXES,

PREPARED BY THE REV.

THOMAS HARTWELL HORNE, B.D.

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OR

DISCOURSES

DIGESTED INTO ONE CONTINUED SERIES,

AND FORMING A COMMENTARY

UPON EVERY BOOK OF

THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT;

TO WHICH IS ANNEXED,

AN IMPROVED EDITION OF A TRANSLATION OF

CLAUDE'S ESSAY ON THE COMPOSITION OF A SERMON.

BY THE

REV. CHARLES SIMEON, M.A.

SENIOR FELLOW OF KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

IN TWENTY-ONE VOLUMES.

VOL. XV.

ROMANS.

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ROMANS.

MDCCCXIX.

A MINISTER'S JOY OVER HIS PEOPLE.

Rom. i. 8. *I thank my God, through Jesus Christ, for you all.*

AS a title of honour, a minister may assume the character of an ambassador from God. But the paternal relation is that which exhibits him before us in the most endearing view. Under the character of a father, St. Paul frequently addressed his converts[a]. Sometimes he even compared himself with a mother "travailing in birth with them[b];" yea, and as a nursing mother, drawing forth, as it were, the breast to them, and "desiring to impart to them his very soul, because they were so dear to him[c]." There is scarcely one of his Epistles which does not begin with thanking God for them, and pouring forth his petitions in their behalf. The Church of Rome, though he had "never yet seen their face in the flesh," were exceeding dear to him; and the more so, because the fame of their attainments had spread throughout the whole world. They were not all equally eminent; yet for all of them, without exception, did he return thanks to God: nor did he think it at all necessary to abstain from bestowing just commendations upon them[d]. Nor shall we do wrong, if, with paternal regard, we express our thankfulness to God for the blessings he has bestowed on those over whom he has placed us, and whom he has graciously committed to our pastoral care.

[a] 1 Thess. ii. 11. [b] Gal. iv. 19.
[c] 1 Thess. ii. 7, 8. [d] Rom. xv. 14.

We give thanks to God, therefore, brethren, for you all:

I. For those of you who have begun to manifest a concern for your souls—

Truly this is a just ground of thanksgiving to God—

[Look at the world around you, and see how regardless men are of their eternal interest———They even put God far from them; saying, "We desire not the knowledge of thy ways"———Every thing occupies in their minds a higher place than God———

But we need not think of others. Look only at your own conduct, from your youth up, till the moment that God was pleased to open your eyes to a sense of your guilt and danger. See how little you cared for God, or for your own souls. Instead of living unto Him who died for you, even to the Lord Jesus Christ who bought you with his blood, you lived altogether to yourselves, and were, so to speak, "without God in the world"———It is possible that some few may have known God, like Timothy, from their very childhood, and never experienced any remarkable change, whether of heart or life. But this is the lot of very few. The great mass of believers were once as manifestly alienated from God as the world around them still are. Compare, then, your present with your former state; and say if there be not reason to bless and adore God for the change that has been wrought in you———]

We do then, and will, thank God through Jesus Christ in your behalf—

[The change has proceeded from God alone. It was he who first "opened your heart to attend to the things which were spoken" in his blessed word. He quickened you from the dead; endued you with, I will not say new *faculties*, but certainly with new *dispositions;* by means of which, you have been brought to hate the ways which you once followed, and to seek the things which you once despised———And it is for Christ's sake that God has vouchsafed this great mercy, even for the sake of him who bought you with his blood, and intercedes for you at the right hand of God———Through that Saviour, then, will I render thanks to God, and bless him for all that he has done for your souls. It may be that, at present, your attainments are but small. But God forbid that I should "despise the day of small things." It is true, also, that where the change is but small, and but recently experienced, we have not that confidence in your state which we feel in reference to more advanced Christians. But nevertheless we rejoice, even as the angels in heaven do, at the

first return of a repenting sinner to his God: and we desire to pray to God that he would establish all which he has wrought in you, and confirm unto the end the blessed work he has begun.]

But with yet greater delight will we return thanks,

II. For those who have made some progress in the Divine life—

Over such persons we rejoice with very exalted joy—

[Of those who begin a heavenly course, how many "run well only for a season!" The stony-ground hearers are very numerous; and their end most deeply to be bewailed. How many thousands are turned aside by the fear of man; and "leave off to behave themselves wisely," because they cannot bear the cross which an adherence to Christ would bring upon them! The cares of this life, also, arrest many in their course, and drag them down to the concerns of this perishing world. And not a few are ensnared by the lusts of the flesh, which they will not mortify; or by the vanities of the world, which they cannot prevail upon themselves to renounce. Even in the apostolic age there were many, who, "after having known the way of righteousness, have forsaken it," and "turned back as a dog to his vomit, and as the sow that has been washed to her wallowing in the mire"———Shall we not bless God, then, for those who have maintained a steadfastness in the ways of God, and have made their profiting to appear? Surely, if augmented growth in corporeal and intellectual strength in a child be a ground of joy and gratitude to his parent, much more must a progress in the divine life, amongst his hearers, be an occasion of praise and thanksgiving to him who "watches over them in the Lord"———]

We do then bless God, through Jesus Christ, for you—

[We well know to what temptations you are exposed, and what conflicts with sin and Satan you have had to maintain; and we therefore adore him who has graciously given you strength according to your day, and held you up in his everlasting arms. O! when we think of the account which poor apostates have to give, and how fearful will be their condition in the eternal world; and when, on the other hand, we contemplate your future prospects; we cannot but bless God for you. Yes, whilst for *them* we weep, and would have "our eyes as a fountain of tears to run down night and day;" for *you* we would adore and magnify our God, and implore him to "perfect that which concerns you," that what he has begun in grace may be consummated in glory———]

Most of all, however, must we thank God,

III. For those who are walking worthy of their high and heavenly calling—

To such our text more especially refers; because the Apostle specifies, as the peculiar ground of his thanksgiving, that "their faith was spoken of throughout the whole world." Now for such we thank God,

1. Because of the glory which they bring to God—

[They live for God: they honour God: they commend his religion throughout the world. A man of low attainments causes but a dim light to shine around him: but a man who "runs well the race that is set before him," is seen of all, and approved of all, whose judgment in any respect accords with the mind of God. He is, in fact, "a light in the world:" and those who behold him are constrained to "glorify our Father which is in heaven"———]

2. Because of the good they do to mankind—

[Who are they that promote the knowledge of God in the world? Who labour for the salvation of their fellow-men? I will not say that persons may not give the aid of their wealth and influence to a religious society from corrupt motives: but those who set on foot these societies, and exert themselves with most self-denying labour in them, are the persons of whom I am now speaking. In truth, but for them there would be little *religious* good done in the whole world. Works of *humanity* might go on without them: but works of *religion* would stagnate altogether. Nothing but apostolic zeal can do the work of an Apostle: but *that* work as far transcends every other, in real excellence and use, as the effulgence of the sun exceeds the twinkling of a star.]

3. Because of the blessings that await them in a better world—

[Who can contemplate the blessedness of a pious soul when admitted into the immediate presence of God, and not rejoice in its welfare? And can we see you, my brethren, pressing forward in your heavenly course, and labouring incessantly to finish the work assigned you, and not thank our God in your behalf? Would not the very stones cry out against us, if we were so insensible, so altogether destitute of love either to God or man? For those that are departed in the faith of Christ we cannot but rejoice: and for you, who are daily ripening for glory, we cannot but feel a measure of thankfulness proportioned to the attainments they make, and the prospects they enjoy.]

Permit me now to ADDRESS you "all,"

1. Individually—

[That which rendered the Christians at Rome so eminent, was "their faith." Let *that* grace, then, be cultivated by every one of you. *That* is the root from which every other grace proceeds. Abound in that; and every other grace will be carried on and perfected within you.]

2. Collectively—

[Be careful, all of you, that we be not disappointed of our hope respecting you — — — Then shall we thank God also for you in the eternal world, and have you as "our joy and crown of rejoicing" for ever and ever.]

MDCCCXX.

PAUL'S LOVE TO THE CHURCH AT ROME.

Rom. i. 9—12. *God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the Gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; that is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.*

IT has been thought by some, that it would have been better for the Church if the Gospels only had been transmitted to posterity, and the Epistles had perished in oblivion. This impious sentiment originates altogether in men's hatred of the truth; and it argues as much ignorance of the Gospels, as it does ingratitude to God. The Gospels contain all the same truths as the Epistles; but the Epistles render them more clear. Never should we have had so complete a view of the correspondence between the Jewish and Christian dispensations, as we are favoured with in the Epistle to the Hebrews: nor would the doctrine of justification by faith alone have been so clearly defined, or so incontrovertibly established, if the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians had never existed. We are moreover indebted to the Epistles for a much clearer insight into practical religion, than

we ever should have had without them. It is true, that the example of Christ is perfect, and that the precepts he has given us are perfect also; but we should never have known what heights of piety are attainable by "men of like passions with ourselves," if we had not known more of the Apostles than what is recorded of them in the Gospels. In the Acts of the Apostles we behold much of their zeal and diligence; but in the Epistles, the full portrait of a minister is drawn with a minuteness and accuracy which we should in vain look for in any other place. To go no further than to the words before us—what an exalted idea have we of the love which a minister should bear towards his people, in this solemn declaration of St. Paul! Let us contemplate it awhile: let us consider the leading points which his words develope; and,

I. His love to the Church at Rome—

St. Paul was a man of a most enlarged heart: he loved all that loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; as well "those who had not seen his face in the flesh," as those who had been converted under his own ministry. He knew the Christians at Rome only by report; yet he felt the most ardent affection for them; and shewed that affection,

1. By his incessant prayers for them—

[The love which exists among the men of this world leads them to regard each other's temporal welfare: but spiritual and Christian love has respect chiefly to the souls of men; and consequently exercises itself most in promoting their eternal welfare. It was thus that St. Paul manifested his love to the Christians at Rome: he prayed for them: he knew that God alone could make them truly happy; and that he would regard the intercessions of his people in their behalf: and therefore "he made mention of them always in his prayers," and laboured "without ceasing" to bring down upon them the blessings of heaven.

Now this was a decisive proof of love. Indeed by this we all may try our love, and may ascertain whether it be merely natural, or truly Christian; yea, all husbands and wives, parents and children, ministers and people, may here discern, not only the *nature* of their affection, as by a touchstone, but

the *measure* of it, as by a scale; and, by examining into the constancy and fervour of their intercessions for others, may learn the state of their own souls before God. O that, like the Apostle, we could appeal to the heart-searching God, and "call him to witness," that we have this evidence at least of "serving him with our spirit in the Gospel of his Son!"]

2. By his earnest desire to visit them—

[Love naturally affects communion with the objects beloved. St. Paul no sooner heard of the piety of those at Rome, than he conceived an ardent affection for them, and a determination of mind, if a favourable opportunity should present itself, to pay them a visit. For many years, occurrences had arisen to prevent the execution of his purpose[a]: but nothing could abate his desire of seeing them, when his way thither should be made clear. Hence, among his other petitions for them, he prayed particularly and constantly that God would be pleased to direct his way to them, and to prosper him in his journey towards them. This, in connexion with the former, was also a strong evidence of his love: for, had he loved them less, he might well have left them to the care of their spiritual fathers, and confined his own ministry to those who were nearer to him and easier of access. Had they been the peculiar objects of his charge, and had he laboured for many years exclusively amongst them, we doubt not but that his desire to see them would have been still more ardent. At all events we are sure, that no minister who truly loves his people and his work will be long absent from his flock without having this the constant language of his heart, "I long to see you!" He may be separated from them "in presence, but not in heart."]

But what were,

II. The particular objects of his intended visit to them—

Rome was then the most magnificent city in the universe: it was the seat of empire, the capital of the world. But was it to gratify a vain curiosity, or to court popularity among the great, that the Apostle sought to go thither? No: he had far nobler ends in view: the true objects of his intended visit were,

1. The advancement of their welfare—

[The Apostle was honoured by God with a power of conferring miraculous gifts: and these, when conferred, tended greatly to strengthen the hands of those who preached the

[a] Rom. xv. 22, 23.

Gospel, and to confirm the faith of them that heard it[b]. To this therefore he might in part refer, when he spoke of "imparting to the Church some spiritual gifts." But he certainly desired to increase also the graces of the Lord's people; to confirm their faith, enliven their hope, and augment their joy. However exalted their characters were, there was yet abundant room for improvement; and he hoped to be a blessed instrument in the hands of God for the advancing and perfecting of his work in their souls. For this end, God is pleased to make use of his ministering servants. On them he confers the honour, not merely of awakening men from the sleep of death, but of "building them up also on their most holy faith," and completing them, as a spiritual edifice, for his own immediate residence. O blessed work indeed! Well might the Apostle desire to be engaged in it, wherever his labours might be successfully employed: for surely no labour can be so great, no suffering so heavy, but it is richly compensated, if this end be in any measure produced.]

2. The comfort of his own soul—

[Next to the happiness of communion with God, is that of fellowship with his believing people. To be appreciated, it must be felt: no one can have any conception of that oneness of heart and mind which exists in the Lord's people, unless he himself has experienced it. When their faith is in lively exercise, and their souls are humbled in the dust, and their hearts overflow with love, who shall give us any adequate idea of their felicity? Certainly it is nearly allied to the happiness of heaven; or rather, it is an anticipation and foretaste of heaven itself. This happiness the Apostle assuredly expected to enjoy among the people at Rome: yea, this happiness does every faithful minister enjoy, according to the degree in which his own soul is devoted to God, and the people to whom he ministers have imbibed his spirit.

O that it may be known and felt amongst us; and that we may increasingly reap this fruit of our intercourse with each other!]

IMPROVEMENT—

1. Let us be thankful to God, who has heard and answered our supplications—

[That you have remembered your minister, we have no doubt: and "God is witness" that he has not been unmindful of you; and now our heavenly Benefactor has graciously renewed to us our opportunities of uniting together in our wonted exercises of prayer and praise. Let us then be thank-

[b] This is strongly marked in his appeal to the Galatians, Gal. iii. 2, 5.

ful; yet "not in word only, but in deed and in truth." Let us consecrate ourselves to him afresh, and strive, with holy ardour, who shall serve him best. This is the true way in which to manifest our thankfulness to God. Our offices may differ, as the offices of the eye and hand; but, if all of us perform the proper duties of our station with care and diligence, he will accept our services, not according to the importance which we annex to them, but according to the mind with which they are performed.]

2. Let us continue to pray for his blessing on our poor endeavours—

[It is to no purpose that God has brought us together again, if he himself be not in the midst of us. "Paul may plant, and Apollos may water: but it is God alone that can give the increase." Let us therefore wait upon him continually. Let us go to him before we meet in the public assembly; and retire from thence to our closets again. Let all that we do be begun, continued, and ended in a humble dependence upon God. Then shall spiritual gifts be richly imparted to you; and the whole body of us be comforted and edified.]

MDCCCXXI.

NO MAN TO BE ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL.

Rom. i. 16. *I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.*

THE Epistle to the Romans, though first in order, is by no means first in point of time; several having, in fact, been written before it. But in respect of importance, it justly deserves to take the lead of all the others. There is no other that is so full and comprehensive on the great subject of a sinner's justification before God; no other so orderly in its arrangement, or so argumentative in its statement; and perhaps no other that is, on the whole, so instructive. It was written to the Church at Rome, which, though not planted by St. Paul, had a distinguished place in his regard. He had long wished to visit that Church, but had been prevented, by a variety of circumstances, from carrying his purpose into execution. Now however he announced his intention of going to them the first opportunity, being

desirous of "having some fruit among them even as he had had among other Gentiles." He had reason indeed to expect, that, in that opulent city, the abode of so many great and learned men, his ministrations would excite no small measure of contempt: but "he was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ;" nor did he think he had any occasion to be ashamed of it; since "it was, and would be, the power of God to the salvation of all who received it in faith." It were well if all who profess to believe the Gospel, were like-minded with him in this particular: but there are multitudes who, notwithstanding they call themselves Christians, are in reality ashamed of the Gospel. That we may assist such persons in discovering their own character, and induce them to walk worthy of their holy profession, we shall shew,

I. When we may be said to be ashamed of the Gospel—

Few perhaps imagine that any such evil is imputable to them: but they, in fact, are guilty of it, who, through fear of that disgrace which attaches to the Gospel, are deterred,

1. From seeking instruction in it—

[Many, from what they have seen and heard of the effects of the Gospel, have a secret conviction that it has an excellence far beyond any they have hitherto discovered: and they would be glad to be better instructed in it: but they dare not go where it is more fully and plainly set forth, because of the odium to which they will expose themselves. They are aware that the very circumstance of attending upon the ministry of one who is stigmatized as evangelical, will tend to fix a stigma on their names also, and to produce an apprehension in the minds of their friends, that they are beginning to favour these obnoxious tenets. If the same doctrines were delivered in a church, where they might attend without suspicion, they would gladly avail themselves of the opportunity to hear them: but, if any sacrifice of character is to be made in order to get instruction, they will rather lose the benefit, than purchase it at such a price. Even a religious book, should it happen to be in their hands when a friend unexpectedly calls in upon them, is put away in haste, lest it should draw down a measure of disgrace upon them. Even the Bible itself they would be afraid to have seen upon their table, if they were supposed

to be reading it with a view to the welfare of their souls. I ask then, Whence does all this proceed? and what does it argue, but that they are ashamed of the Gospel of Christ? They have none of these feelings in reference to other places of worship, or to other books, no, not even to plays and novels: it is plain therefore that the Gospel is that which creates the offence; and that the dread of the odium attached to it diverts them from prosecuting the knowledge of it. Such persons may obtain mercy of the Lord, even as did Nicodemus, whose children they are; yea, they may, like him, become distinguished ornaments of the Gospel: but they are in great danger lest God give them over to their unworthy fears, and leave them to "perish for lack of knowledge."]

2. From making an open profession of it—

[After that men have attained the knowledge of the truth, the same evil principle frequently operates in their hearts, to make them ashamed of confessing it. They see that the followers of Christ are still at this day, no less than in the Apostolic age, "a sect that is everywhere spoken against[a];" and they cannot bring their minds to participate their reproach. They would partake of the blessings of the Gospel, without "partaking of its affliction:" they would enjoy their Lord's crown, but not bear his cross. But such cowardice is expressly designated as a being "ashamed of the Gospel[b];" and it will assuredly rob them of all the advantages which they desire to possess. If they would be Christ's disciples indeed, they must "deny themselves, and take up their cross daily, and follow Christ[c]." Like Moses, they must "*choose* to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming *the reproach of Christ* greater riches than all the treasures in Egypt[d]:" they must not be contented with honouring Christ in secret, but must "follow him without the camp bearing his reproach[e]." Indeed it is not reputation merely that they must be willing to sacrifice, but life also, for Christ's sake: and, if they stop short of this, they "lose their souls" for ever[f]. In some respects these are in a worse state than they of whom we have before spoken; because they sin against greater light and knowledge, and are guilty of infinitely greater ingratitude towards their Lord, whose love and mercy they inwardly acknowledge, and from whom they expect all the blessings of grace and glory. To these therefore our Lord speaks in very awful terms, and warns them, that as they are ashamed of him, and deny him, "he will be ashamed of them, and deny them, in the presence

[a] Acts xxviii. 22. [b] 2 Tim. i. 8. [c] Matt. xvi. 24, 25.
[d] Heb. xi. 25, 26. [e] Heb. xiii. 13. [f] Matt. x. 38, 39.

of his Father and his holy angels[g]." "The fearful, no less than the unbelieving," will have their portion in the lake of fire at the last day[h]. "If we will not suffer with Christ, we cannot reign with him[i]." "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; but with the mouth confession is made, and must be made, unto salvation[k]."]

3. From walking worthy of it—

[Whilst the *principles* of the Gospel are by the world at large accounted "foolishness[l]," the *practice* enjoined by it is no less offensive to them, on account of its contrariety to all the desires and habits of the carnal mind. Hence they who profess the Gospel are often led into compliances which are unsuitable to their high calling, and dishonourable to their profession. Under the idea of "becoming all things to all men" they belie their consciences, and betray the cause which they are pledged to serve. They forget that Paul's compliances were to *save others*[m]; whilst theirs are only to *screen themselves*. But this is "to put their light under a bushel," when their duty is "to make it shine before men[n]." They are "not to have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather to reprove them[o]," and, like Noah, to "condemn that world[p]" which sets itself against the Majesty of heaven. Instead of "following a multitude to do evil," the Christian is to consider himself as set by God to be "a light in the world," that he may "hold forth to others, in the whole of his spirit and conduct, the word of life[q]." And all who are kept by fear from thus adorning the Gospel, will be numbered amongst hypocrites and dissemblers with God[r]. If a den of lions were to be the recompence of our fidelity to God, we are not to be intimidated; we are not to be ashamed[s]. The Lord Jesus Christ "endured the cross, and despised the shame" for us[t]; and we must brave contempt and death in their most terrific forms for him.]

Thus all who are deterred from "following the Lord fully," are, in fact, "ashamed of Christ." But how unreasonable this conduct is, will appear, whilst we shew,

II. Why we should not be so—

[g] Matt. x. 32, 33. and Mark viii. 35, 38. [h] Rev. xxi. 8.
[i] 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12. [k] Rom. x. 10. [l] 1 Cor. i. 18.
[m] 1 Cor. ix. 19—23. "To gain the more." Observe how often that is repeated.
[n] Matt. v. 14—16. [o] Eph. v. 11. [p] Heb. xi. 7.
[q] Phil. ii. 15, 16. [r] Gal. ii. 11—13. [s] Dan. vi. 10.
[t] Heb. xii. 2.

Certainly, if any one might reasonably give way to shame, Paul might, when he contemplated the preaching of the Gospel at Rome. For as Rome was the seat of wealth and science, the preaching of the cross was likely to be peculiarly offensive to them, inasmuch as it poured contempt on all that was valued there, and required that they should place all their hopes for time and eternity on a poor despised Jew, who had suffered the most ignominious of all deaths from the hands of his own countrymen. But Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel; nor had he any real reason to be so: for,

1. It is a revelation of God's grace to man—

[A wonderful mystery it is; a mystery which all "the angels of heaven desire to look into," and which, as an expression of God's good-will to man, brings the highest possible glory to God himself. In it a way of salvation is provided for fallen man; a way exactly suited to man's necessities, and at the same time displaying in perfect harmony all the perfections of the Godhead. It exhibits the Father sending his only dear Son to take upon him our nature, and to "bear our sins in his own body on the tree." It represents the co-equal, co-eternal Son of God actually fulfilling that very office, and "reconciling us to God by his own blood." It sets forth also the Holy Spirit, the third Person in the ever blessed Trinity, undertaking to apply that salvation to the souls of men, and by his almighty power to render them "meet for the inheritance" prepared for them.

Now I would ask, What is here to be ashamed of? Is that, in which all "the wisdom of God, and the power of God," are concentrated and displayed[u], an object which we should blush to acknowledge and confess? Is that, which is the one theme of adoration and thanksgiving to all the hosts of heaven, fit to be disowned by man on earth, so that the very mention of it shall suffuse his face with shame? Shall sin, in all its varied forms, stalk abroad with unblushing effrontery, and this glorious mystery be veiled for fear of man's reproach? Abhorred be the thought! Let the man that has ever been ashamed of the Gospel, be ashamed of his own extreme folly and impiety: and let that which is so glorious in the eyes of all the heavenly hosts, be henceforth glorious in our eyes; and let us "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of it[x]."]

[u] 1 Cor. i. 24. [x] Phil. iii. 8.

2. It is God's instrument for the salvation of a ruined world—

[Look back, and see what it is that has been the means of saving so many myriads of our fellow-creatures, when of the fallen angels not so much as one has ever been saved? What saved Adam, but the Gospel, which promised that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head?" What saved Abraham, but the Gospel, which was preached to him in these words; "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed?" Could you go up to the third heavens, and hear, as Paul did, the songs of the whole heavenly choir, you would hear but one note amongst them all, ascribing "salvation to God and to the Lamb for ever." Is this then a subject for *us* to be ashamed of? Shall we be ashamed of that, which alone has put a difference between us and devils? of that, which is "the rod of God's strength," whereby he has brought millions, through seas of difficulty, to the full enjoyment of the heavenly Canaan? The brazen serpent that healed the Israelites in the wilderness, though it was only a piece of brass, became an object of idolatrous regard: and shall we make "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God an object of shame and contempt? If we marvel at them for giving God's honour to a piece of brass, what wonder must it create amongst all the heavenly hosts, that any creature, to whom the Gospel of salvation comes, should treat it but with the profoundest veneration, and the most ardent gratitude!]

3. It is actually effectual for the salvation of every one that believeth—

[Never did it fail in any instance: it is equally effectual for "Jew or Gentile," and for the vilest, as well as the best, of the human race. It will leave none under the guilt and condemnation of their sins, none under the power and pollution of them. The righteousness which it provides for sinners is so pure and perfect, that, when clothed in it, they stand before God without spot or blemish. The grace treasured up for them in their living Head is so abundant, that the weakest of mankind, even though he be opposed by all the hosts of hell, shall find it sufficient for him. It will not bring him out of six difficulties, and leave him to perish in the seventh[y]; but "will keep him to the end[z]," and suffer "nothing to pluck him out of his Redeemer's hands[a]." Is this then a thing to be ashamed of? and shall *they* be ashamed of it who profess to expect salvation by it? Methinks, a man must be almost as destitute of reason as of piety, who can account it any ground for blushing,

[y] Job v. 19. [z] 1 Cor. i. 8. [a] John x. 28.

that he loves, and admires, and glories in the cross of Christ; yea, and determines never to his latest hour to glory in any thing else[b].]

ADDRESS—

1. Let not any of you then be ashamed of the Gospel—

[Let not *the rich;* for it will make you richer than ten thousand worlds: "the riches of Christ are absolutely unsearchable[c]." Let not *the poor;* for it raises them to an equality with the greatest on earth, and gives them crowns and kingdoms for their inheritance[d]. Let not *the learned* be ashamed of it; for in it is contained "the manifold wisdom of God;" and even angels are made wiser by the revelation of it to the Church[e]. Let not *the unlearned;* for it will "make them wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." Let not any thus dishonour it, till they cease to need its blessings, or have found a substitute worthy to supersede it. God is "not ashamed to be called our God[f]:" O! be not ye ashamed to become, and to be called, his people.]

2. Let not the Gospel be ashamed of you—

[Many, alas! who profess to love the Gospel, are in their conduct a disgrace to it. Their pride, their passion, their worldly-mindedness, perhaps too their want of truth and honesty, together with a variety of other evils predominant in them, cause "the way of truth to be evil spoken of[g]," and "the very name of God to be blasphemed." In every age, and in every Church, such instances occur; and lamentable it is to say, that no people are more unconscious of their guilt than they. It is on account of such persons that our Lord says, "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come: but woe unto him by whom the offence cometh: it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were cast into the depths of the sea[h]." Look to it then, ye professors of godliness, that this tremendous evil be not imputable to you: and endeavour so to walk, "that the adversary may have no evil thing to say of you," and "that they may be ashamed, who falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ[i]."]

[b] Gal. vi. 14. [c] Eph. iii. 8. [d] Jam. i. 9 and iv. 5.
[e] Eph. iii. 10. [f] Heb. xi. 16. [g] 2 Pet. ii. 2.
[h] Matt. xviii. 6, 7. [i] Tit. ii. 8. and 1 Pet. iii. 16.

MDCCCXXII.

THE LOST STATE OF THE GENTILE WORLD.

Rom. i. 20, 21. *They are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God.*

HERE the plan of the epistle begins to be developed. St. Paul, intending to prove that there was one only way of salvation for the whole race of mankind, begins with shewing, that the Gentile world were altogether guilty before God, and lying under a just sentence of condemnation. In the next chapter he shews the same respecting the Jews: and, in the third, he confirms, from the Scriptures of truth, all that he hath spoken respecting both the one and the other; and from thence deduces the general conclusion, that they are all shut up unto the faith of Christ, and must seek salvation by him alone.

In this present discourse we shall have to consider the state of the Gentiles, against whom universally the judgments of God are denounced; "the wrath of God being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," and especially against "those who hold (or imprison) the truth in unrighteousness," which they have done in all ages of the world[a].

But that we may bring the matter home to ourselves also, we shall shew

I. How inexcusable they are for their conduct towards God—

The Gentiles have in every age had sufficient opportunities of attaining the knowledge of God—

[The things of God which are exclusively made known to us in the book of revelation, they could not be acquainted with, because the light of revelation was not vouchsafed to them: but the book of creation was open to them, and equally legible to all; and from thence they might acquire a considerable knowledge of God's nature and perfections. In beholding the heavenly bodies all moving in their orbits; and the earth so abundantly furnished with every thing for the accommodation

[a] ver. 18.

of man; and man himself the most noble of all God's works, his body so curiously wrought, and his soul so richly endowed; in beholding these things, I say, they could not but know, that there was some superior Being, who had formed them all. They could not look upon any work of art,—a house, for instance, or a watch, or any thing that required skill,—but their minds must of necessity be led to contemplate the maker of it: and a similar necessity was imposed upon them by all the works of creation. Having traced up every thing to a First Cause, they must see that, as He was the cause of all that existed besides himself, there could be nothing to give existence to him; and that consequently, he must be self-existent and eternal. Moreover, they must see, from the immensity and the excellency of all his works, that there can be no limit to his wisdom, his power, or his goodness; but that these perfections of his must of necessity be infinite. That these deductions were open to them we are sure, because some of their more enlightened philosophers have actually made these discoveries, though certainly with less clearness and precision than we by the means of revelation are enabled to do. And God himself affirms it in the verses preceding our text; saying, that the things concerning him which were invisible to human eyes, were nevertheless "clearly to be seen and understood in his visible works, even his eternal power and Godhead[b]." St. Paul also, when addressing heathens, quotes to them their own poets, to shew, that, in the representations which they foolishly made of the Supreme Being, they did in fact violate the law that was in their own minds, and act contrary to the light that was within them[c].]

But they did not improve these opportunities aright—

[They *entertained most unworthy conceptions of the Deity.* Instead of regarding him as a Spirit who pervaded all space, they "made images of him like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things;" and then bowed down to the work of their own hands, and said, "Deliver me; for thou art my god[d]." What could be more insulting to the Divine Majesty than such conduct as this?

Moreover *they testified no gratitude towards him for all the benefits that he conferred upon them.* Innumerable were the blessings which in constant succession he bestowed upon them[e]; yet "were they not thankful[f]," but abused his gifts, instead of taking occasion from them to love and glorify the Giver.

[b] ver. 19, 20.
[c] Acts xvii. 28, 29.
[d] Compare ver. 23. with Isai. xliv. 9--20.
[e] Acts xiv. 16, 17.
[f] ver. 21.

They sought not in any thing to please him, nor cared however much they might displease him. The abominations they committed cannot even be thought of but with horror and amazement[g]. And, whilst they were thus bent on the gratification of their lusts and appetites, and purposely cast out of their minds all those notices of a Supreme Being, which from time to time arose to check them in their excesses[h], they were given over to the dominion of every hateful disposition that could assimilate them to the god of this world, whose willing servants they were. What an assemblage of evils was there accumulated in their character[i]! — — — Yet was this representation of them by no means overcharged. Their own historians, and poets, and philosophers have justified every word that is here spoken. What the poet said of the Cretans might, with few exceptions, be applied to all; "The Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, slow-bellies[k]," a wretched compound of falsehood, and cruelty, and abominable sensuality.

Nor were they merely impelled to these things by the impetuosity of their own passions; for, *whilst they had internal convictions of the impiety of this conduct, they deliberately approved and honoured those who were most addicted to it.*]

From hence it appears how inexcusable they were, and how justly sentenced to eternal condemnation—

[Had they been able to plead *ignorance*, they would have had some kind of excuse: but they could not do this: for "they did really know God;" but "did not choose to retain him in their knowledge:" and so far were they from having this plea to extenuate their crimes, that the light which they resisted constitutes the heaviest aggravation of their guilt: "This is their condemnation, that they loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil[l]." Again, if they could not plead ignorance, neither could they plead *necessity*; for they were under no necessity to dishonour God in this way, either from without or from within. They were perfectly free agents in all that they did: and though they could not, nor can any child of man, fulfil all the Divine will, or themselves do any thing spiritually good, yet they might have abstained from much which they did amiss, and done much which they neglected to do: and therefore they are justly chargeable with all the guilt that they contracted; and are as reprehensible before God for not using the powers which they possessed, as they would have been, if those powers had been ever so enlarged.

All that has been spoken in reference to the heathen in former days, is still applicable to them at this time. The notices of a Deity may be much more obscured in the minds of some

[g] ver. 26, 27. [h] ver. 28. [i] ver. 29—31.
[k] Tit. i. 12. [l] John iii. 19.

than of others; and the criminality of all must be estimated in some measure according to the peculiar circumstances under which they live: but, inasmuch as all violate the law that is in their own minds, and neglect to improve the advantages they enjoy, they all are obnoxious to the charge contained in our text, and are therefore "without excuse."]

But, that we may bring this matter home to ourselves, let us consider,

II. How much more inexcusable we are, if we resemble them—

We have opportunities of knowing God, far beyond any that the heathen ever enjoyed—

[Even in reading the book of creation, we, by means of our superior advantages, are enabled to see much that was hid from them, or, at least, to discover with incomparably greater clearness the unity and perfections of God, which they could but faintly and doubtingly discern. But we have a revelation, wherein God has proclaimed his own name, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty[m]." We have also a yet clearer revelation of God in the person of his own Son, who is "the image of the invisible God[n]," "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person[o]." Nor is it from *words* only that we discover his excellency, but from *actions* also. We behold our God incarnate: we behold his glory veiled, so that, without being blinded with the overwhelming splendour of his majesty, we may contemplate him, and familiarize ourselves, as it were, with his adorable perfections. In this especially the most ignorant amongst us excels all the greatest philosophers of Greece and Rome; we behold the attribute of *mercy*; we can tell how *that* may be exercised in perfect consistency with *justice:* we can tell how God can be "just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly[p]." In a word, all the wonders of redeeming love are set before us in terms so plain, that "he who runs may read them."]

But how have we improved these advantages?

[Have we glorified God *as God*, or his blessed Son *as the one hope of a ruined world?* Alas! alas! if we take a survey of our own spirit and conduct through life, we shall find, that there has been but little difference between us and heathens.

Consider *our defects.* "We have not glorified God as God,

[m] Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.
[n] Col. i. 15.
[o] Heb. i. 3.
[p] Rom. iii. 26. and iv 5.

neither been thankful." What might justly have been expected of persons privileged as we have been? Might it not have been reasonably hoped that persons redeemed from death and hell by the blood of God's only dear Son should have been incessantly pouring out their souls in grateful adorations, and dedicating to his service their every faculty, and every instant of their time? Methinks, it should have been a work of pain and self-denial to devote so much as a thought to any other subject, especially to any subject unconnected with this. But have our hearts been thus exercised? Has it been thus our delight to anticipate the employment of heaven? Or rather, have not the wonders of redemption had far less influence on our minds than the things of time and sense? Yea, have they not for the most part been passed by, as though they were only "a cunningly-devised fable," wherein we had no interest?

Consider also *our errors*. We have not, it is true, transformed our God into an idol: but we have had scarcely more worthy conceptions of him than if he had been an idol. *In theory* we have ascribed to him the different perfections of his nature; but *in practice* we have denied them all—his omniscience, his holiness, his justice, and his truth, by vainly imagining, either that he did not behold, or that he would not punish, our iniquities. We, as he himself tells us, have "thought him to be even such an one as ourselves:" whilst exalting in our minds his attribute of mercy, we have, in fact, divested him of all that belongs to him as the Governor of the universe: a God all mercy, is a God unjust.

Consider yet further *our excesses*. These, as to the overt act, do not proceed to such extremes as were common among the Gentiles: but the abominations that we do commit, sufficiently shew, that we are not restrained by any regard to God, so much as by public laws and popular opinion. Christianity having elevated the general tone of morals, those hideous crimes which were but too frequent among the Gentiles are scarcely so much as thought of amongst us: but, in all that we can do consistently with the laws of society, we are not a whit superior to the heathen themselves. What juster picture could the Apostle have drawn, if he had intended to describe, what is improperly called, the Christian world? Take us as a people, and say, whether we are not "filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; yea, whether we be not full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whether we be not whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, implacable, unmerciful: and say particularly, whether, not-

31. In reading this, *pause* after every word.

withstanding we know the evil of such things, we do not both practise them ourselves, and choose for our friends and companions those who are guilty of those very practices? Who, I would ask, are the favourites with the world? the godly, and they who are conformed to the Saviour's image? No: but the ungodly, who by their conduct and example sanction all the corruptions of the human heart[r].]

How inexcusable then must we be!

[Verily, "the men of Nineveh will rise up in judgment against us;" yea, the Gentiles also, throughout the universe, will condemn us, because of the extent to which we have imitated their evils, and abused our infinitely superior advantages. "The Gospel which we enjoy, if it prevail not with us to put away our sins, and to walk as Christ walked," will only prove to us "a savour of death" to our more aggravated and heavier condemnation[s]. "If Christ had not come and spoken unto us, we had not had sin: but now we have no cloak for our sin[t]."]

SEE then,

1. How thankful we should be for the Gospel of Christ!

[Doubtless one reason why the world was left without a Saviour for four thousand years, was, that the world might see how little they could do to restore themselves to the favour and image of God. At no period were the powers of the human intellect carried to a greater extent, than at the time of our Saviour's advent: but what did philosophy effect? what did it effect even amongst those who most exalted it? Nothing to any good purpose. The poets and philosophers themselves were as much addicted to sin as the vulgar, whom they looked down upon with contempt: and, if it were not for the light of the Gospel, we should be as much immersed in sensuality as they. Let this be borne in mind, that, whether born in a Christian or a heathen land, we are all by nature equally corrupt and helpless; and all need a Saviour, the one as much as the other. To *us* a Saviour is revealed, and precisely such an one as we stand in need of. O let us then bless our God for the revelation of his grace: let us be thankful that we see what many prophets and kings desired to see, but desired it in vain: and let Christ, who is the sum and substance of the Gospel, be truly "precious" to all our souls.]

2. What effect our superior advantages should produce upon us—

[We should aspire after the highest possible attainments, in love and gratitude, in purity and holiness. We should aim

[r] ver. 32. [s] 2 Cor. ii. 16. [t] John xv. 22.

at "glorifying God as God," and Christ as Christ. Let us then contemplate Christ in all his offices, as our Prophet, as our Priest, as our King. Let us not be contented with a theoretical or superficial survey of his character, but let us search into it, and ruminate upon it, and get our souls suitably impressed with it. Let us get such views of him, as shall render us insensible to all created excellency; as a man who looks at the meridian sun is blinded to all inferior objects. Let us in these holy exercises seek to obtain a conformity to his image; agreeably to what the Apostle has said, "We beholding his glory are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord[u]." Let no measure of resemblance to him ever satisfy us; no efforts in his service ever content us. Let us, even if we have attained an apostolic measure of zeal and holiness, "forget it all, and reach forward" to higher attainments[x]. Let our trust in him be simple; our fellowship with him intimate; our confidence in him assured; our expectation from him large; our devotion to him ardent; our obedience uniform; our surrender of ourselves to him entire, and unreserved. Let us live for him and "walk worthy of him;" so that HE may be glorified, yea, and "be magnified in us" also, both in life and death[y]."]

[u] 2 Cor. iii. 18. [x] Phil. iii. 13, 14. [y] Phil. i. 20.

MDCCCXXIII.

MEN HATERS OF GOD.

Rom. i. 30. *Haters of God.*

WHAT! are there any persons of this character upon earth? It cannot be: it were a libel upon human nature to suppose it. Go round to all the people you can find, and put the question to them, 'Are you a hater of God?' They will spurn at the idea, and deem the question a gross insult. The moral part of mankind would be filled with indignation at such a strange calumnious suggestion. And the most immoral would say, 'I certainly do not serve him as I ought: but, as to "hating him," "is thy servant a dog, that he should do this[a]?"' But let us "come to the word and to the testimony." Of whom speaks the Apostle the words which we

[a] 2 Kings viii. 12, 13.

have read? Does he give this character to some of a pre-eminently impious disposition? or does he ascribe it to the whole Gentile world, even to every child of man, so long as he continues in his natural and unconverted state? It is most assuredly in this latter sense that the words must be understood: for the scope of this part of the epistle is to shew, not that *some particular persons* need a Saviour, but "that *every* mouth must be stopped, and *all the world* become guilty before God[b]." I am far from saying that all persons manifest their enmity against God in *the same way*, and to *the same extent:* but if we will candidly examine the state of mankind, we shall find it precisely such as the Apostle here describes it; and that the human heart, till changed by Divine grace, is "full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity;" and that men still are, no less than in the Apostle's days, "whisperers, backbiters, *haters of God*, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful[c]." With the description at large I shall not trouble you. It is my intention to confine myself to that particular part of it which I have selected for my text: in confirmation of which, I shall,

I. Establish the fact, that unregenerate men are haters of God—

This fact is absolutely universal—

[Look at every child of man, and see what are his *dispositions* and *conduct* towards the God of heaven and earth: and all, without exception, will be found to deserve the character here assigned them. All betray an enmity against God; they *feel it in their hearts*, and *manifest it in their lives*. If their minds were rightly disposed towards God, they would esteem him above all; and desire him above all; and delight in him above all; and, in comparison of his favour, there would be nothing regarded by them as worthy of a thought. But what is the fact? There is not any thing, however vain or worthless, or vile, that does not occupy a higher place in their esteem than He. Any gratification which they affect, is sufficient to draw them from their allegiance to Him, and to induce

[b] Rom. iii. 19. [c] ver. 29—31.

them to violate his most express commands. The favour of a fellow-creature is more sought than his; and the displeasure of a poor sinful worm more dreaded than his. Even Satan himself is deemed more worthy to be obeyed than he: as our Lord has said, "Ye are of your father the devil; and the lusts of your father ye will do[d]." But the will of our heavenly Father we will not do. There is no such satisfaction felt in any thing which he enjoins; no such readiness to comply with his sacred motions in the soul. In truth, what is the whole life of an unregenerate man? is it not a state of rebellion against God? There is not a command of his which we desire to keep: there is not one which we do not violate.

Now let us try this conduct by an easy test. Suppose that a child, or a servant, treated us as we have treated God: suppose that, whilst he acknowledged his relation to us, he never sought to please us; never cared however much he displeased us; never felt any comfort in our society, but affected rather the society of our bitterest enemies; never was concerned about our honour or interests; but would sacrifice both the one and the other at any time, without any shame or remorse—what construction should we put upon that conduct? Should we not say that his mind was altogether alienated from us? No doubt we should: and that is the construction which God himself puts on our deportment towards him: "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be[e]."]

This fact is also realized, to an inconceivable degree—

[It would appear impossible for a man so to hate God, as that HIS annihilation and extinction should prove to them a source of real satisfaction: but I put it to the consciences of all, and ask, Supposing we were told, from undoubted authority, that there was no God to control us, no God to inspect our ways, no God to call us to an account, and that we were at liberty to follow our own ways without any fear of a hereafter, would it not, on the whole, be an acceptable report? The Psalmist says, "The fool hath said in his heart, No God[f]." Now, whether we understand that as an affirmation or a wish, it equally shews what I am now contending for; that the very existence of God is a burthen to the carnal mind; and that the extinction of it, if it were possible, would be welcomed as a relief. In truth, we flee from him, as Adam did after the fall[g], and banish him from our minds as much as possible[h], and live altogether as "without him in the world[i]."

[d] John viii. 44. [e] Rom. viii. 7. [f] Ps. xiv. 1.
[g] Gen. iii. 8. [h] Ps. x. 4. [i] Eph. ii. 12.

And thus we give a clear proof that we should esteem it no loss if we could get rid of him altogether.]

Melancholy, indeed, is this fact. I will now endeavour to,

II. Account for it—

One would suppose, that He who is all excellence in himself, and the one source of all benefits to man, should be an object of love, and not of hatred, to us: and so he would be, if we had retained our primitive state of innocence: but we have fallen, and are become inconceivably depraved: and therefore we hate him on account of,

1. The contrariety that exists between him and us—

[There is not a greater difference between light and darkness, than between him and us; not only in his natural attributes, which, of course, we cannot resemble, but in his moral perfections also, which in our original creation were enstamped upon us. There is not any one thing which God loves, which we do not hate with a perfect hatred. Holiness, in all its branches, is that which he approves: but in no one respect do we love it. A conformity to his image we never seek; nay, if we behold it in another, we hate and abhor it. This matter has been put to a trial. God himself has become incarnate, and exhibited to the world a perfect transcript of his perfections: and how did the world treat him? There was not an indignity which they did not offer him; nor did they rest, till they had put him to the most ignominious death. Nor was this the conduct of the ignorant populace alone, but of every rank and order in society: kings, priests, people, all joined in the same murderous assaults upon him. His image, too, was represented in his holy Prophets and Apostles: and how were all of them treated? In every age they were the objects of most inveterate hatred; insomuch, that, of all the Apostles, one alone escaped the sword of martyrdom. And is human nature different now from what it was in former ages? The laws of men have imposed restraints on the enmity of the heart: but were those restraints removed, and occasion for the exercise of men's evil dispositions afforded, the same scenes would be transacted now as formerly: for men at this hour, no less than in former ages, "love darkness rather than light;" and would gladly extinguish the light, that they might be left to follow their own ways unmolested and unreproved.]

2. The consciousness we feel that he will summon us to his tribunal—

[We may treat revelation as we will; but we all feel in our bosoms a persuasion that God inspects our ways, and hates our proceedings, and will avenge the breaches of his holy laws. We may try to divest ourselves of these feelings, and may prevail to dissipate them for a moment; but they will return; and at certain times and seasons will occasion much uneasiness to the mind, and produce there a wish that we could by any means avoid the judgment that awaits us. We feel that God is, and must be, an enemy to us: and therefore we cannot contemplate him with any other feeling than that of fear and dread.

It may be said indeed by some, that this is by no means their experience: that, on the contrary, they feel a complacent regard for God, and a grateful sense of his mercies.

But to this I would answer, It is not to God *as revealed in the Scripture*, but as they paint him to themselves in their own vain imaginations, that they feel this regard. They conceive of him as bearing no anger against them for their sins, and as lowering his demands of obedience to the standard which they have fixed for themselves, and as looking with complacency on their formal self-righteous endeavours: it is *in this view of him alone* that they are pleased with him: they despoil him of his own proper attributes, and clothe him with attributes of their own creation; and then they worship the work of their own hands. But, let him be presented to them in his own proper character—as a holy Being, that cannot look upon iniquity without the utmost abhorrence; as a just Being, that cannot but punish with everlasting destruction every impenitent sinner; and as a God of truth, that will accept no human being but as clothed in the righteousness of his dear Son—and they will lose all their fancied regard for him, and shew towards him all the aversion which we have before described. They will find in themselves that Scripture realized, "My soul lothed them; and their soul abhorred me[k]."]

Regarding the fact as proved, I now come to,

III. Make some reflections upon it—

In the view of this fact, we may observe,

1. How deep should be our humiliation before God!

[Men are not humbled, because they will not look at themselves in the glass of God's word. They think only of some particular sins which they may have committed; and put out of view altogether the disposition of their souls towards God. But, if we would have a just sense of our condition, we must probe our hearts to the bottom; and see, not merely

[k] Zech. xi. 8.

what we *are*, but what we should have been if we had been left to follow our dispositions without restraint. Look at the souls that are now shut up in the abodes of misery in hell: Has any new disposition been infused into them, since they have entered into the eternal world? No: they have only the dispositions which they carried with them: and the only difference is, that they are now left to manifest *to the uttermost* what in this world was kept from issuing forth in all its full malignity. Under the displeasure of their God, so far are they from humbling themselves before him, that they "gnaw their tongues with anguish, and blaspheme the God of heaven because of their pains[l]." What would they have said in this world, if they had been told what was really in their hearts? They would have deemed it a gross calumny. But such would be our deportment *here*, if our corruptions were not restrained, either by education, or by the preventing grace of God. And, if we be sensible how great our depravity is, we shall see that no humiliation can be too deep for any of us; but that it becomes all of us, without exception, to "abhor ourselves, even as holy Job did, in dust and ashes."]

2. What obligations we owe to God for his Gospel!

[In the Gospel is revealed a way of reconciliation for us, through Christ. O! what love was it that bestowed upon us such an inestimable gift as that of God's only dear Son, to make reconciliation for us through the blood of his cross! And here it is particularly to be noticed, that God does not so much offer to be reconciled to us, as he invites us to be reconciled to him. The address which his ministers are commissioned to make to men, is, "We beseech you in Christ's stead, *Be ye reconciled to God*[m]." The great obstruction to friendship between God and us lies altogether on our part. Not a single moment would God retain his anger against us, if we humbled ourselves before him, and besought his favour for Christ's sake. But, though importuned by him, we continue obstinate in our alienation from him. Still, however, the Gospel follows us with invitations and entreaties to lay aside our enmity, and to accept his proffered mercies. Be thankful for this marvellous kindness vouchsafed unto you: for, if once you be taken into the eternal world, there will be no longer any forbearance on the part of God; but his wrath will burst forth against you, and burn even to the lowest hell to all eternity[n]. It would be terrible to have all the creation for your enemies: but to have the Creator himself your enemy, and *that* for ever and ever, O! how inconceivably terrible

[l] Rev. xvi. 10, 11. [m] 2 Cor. v. 20.
[n] Ps. xi. 6. Rom. ii. 8, 9.

will this be! Well! bless your God that *this* need not be your fate, nor shall be, if only you will throw down the weapons of your rebellion, and implore mercy at God's hands for Christ's sake.]

3. What a blessing the Gospel proves to all who receive it!

[The effect of the Gospel is, to "slay this enmity," and to bring the soul into a state of peace with God. Nor does it merely put away our guilt; but removes also our indisposition to what is good and holy, and even writes the law of God upon our hearts; so that there is in those who receive it as great a resemblance to God, as there was before a contrariety. The mind of a true convert is brought into a conformity to God's mind, and his ways into a conformity to God's ways. Thus, "being agreed, they walk together" in mutual love; and earth is made, to man, a foretaste of heaven itself. See, then, my brethren, that ye experience this effect. See that you love all that God loves, and do all that God approves. Then will you shew that there is an efficacy in the Gospel to transform the soul into the Divine image, and to render it meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.]

MDCCCXXIV.

THOSE WHO JUDGE OTHERS, JUDGED.

Rom. ii. 3—5. *Thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.*

HUMAN nature is the same in every age, and every place: external circumstances may make an external difference; but internally, every child of man is alike alienated from God, and alike needs the salvation revealed in the Gospel. To prove this, is the scope of the three first chapters of this epistle. In the foregoing chapter, it is proved in reference to the Gentiles; and in this, in reference to the Jews. But to which of these the words which we have just read are addressed, admits of doubt. We think how-

ever, that the transition to the Jews is at the commencement of this chapter, notwithstanding they are not expressly mentioned till the 17th verse: and the not mentioning of their name proceeded, we apprehend from a delicacy of feeling, and a fear lest he might, by a too direct attack, arm, as it were, their minds against him. This certainly accords with the very tender regard which he manifests towards them throughout this whole epistle: and it was the less necessary to mention them, because their contempt of the Gentiles was so fully known, and so universally acknowledged. But the characters that are addressed are the same, whether amongst Jews or Gentiles: and, as the whole force of the address will be invalidated if we do not clearly discern to whom it is delivered, we will,

I. Shew to whom the expostulation is addressed—

There were among the Gentiles some who in their public discourses inculcated a purer morality than that which was generally practised, but in their own life and conversation were guilty of the very crimes which they condemned: and so it is at this day among those who call themselves Christians. The disposition which is here reproved shews itself,

1. In the world towards each other—

[From whatever it may proceed, whether from envy or uncharitableness, there is a disposition in all to view others in an unfavourable light, at the same time that they themselves are faulty, either in the same precise way, or in other ways to the same extent. Indeed such is the extreme blindness of human nature, that the more any are under the dominion of pride, or vanity, or covetousness, or ambition, the more they hate those in whom the same evils are predominant: the proud man cannot endure the proud; and so of the rest.

But if this disposition manifests itself amongst equals, much more does it among those who are placed at some distance from each other, whether the difference be in *age*, or *rank*, or *relation*, or *general habits and dispositions*. The old condemn the follies of the young; and the young the severity of the old. The rich inveigh against the idleness or dishonesty of the poor; the poor, against the selfishness and oppressiveness of the rich. Parents complain of their children; children, of their parents.

Masters, of their servants; and servants, of their masters. In like manner, the bigot and the free-thinker, the prodigal and the penurious, the hermit and the gay, all love to indulge in mutual criminations; all overlooking their own peculiar failings, and condemning without reserve the characteristic failings of others.]

2. In the world, towards those who profess religion—

[To be religious is, with the generality, the greatest of all crimes: there is no other so little tolerated, so universally condemned. Opprobrious names are universally affixed to the godly: and the current title, whatever it may be, is sufficient to make a man despised, and shunned, and dreaded, as a public nuisance all the world over. Supposing for a moment that religious persons were unwise in laying so great a stress on religion, is there no evil in neglecting God and our immortal souls? yet the world overlook all their own impiety, as if there were no harm in it, and set no bounds to their invectives against those who serve and honour God. It may be thought that the wild enthusiast alone is the object of their aversion: but were the Apostles wild enthusiasts? Was our blessed Lord wanting in wisdom and prudence? Yet were they all regarded "as the filth of the earth, and the offscouring of all things:" and the very men who scrupled not to suborn false witnesses, and to imbrue their hands in the blood of an innocent man, could find no evil in themselves, but only in those who were the objects of their implacable aversion.

If an occasion arise where a professor of religion acts unworthy of his profession, what a cause of triumph is it to an ungodly world! With what exultation are his faults imputed to the whole body of religious people, and all of them condemned as hypocrites alike! The sins of the ungodly and profane are all reputed as nothing in comparison of his crime; and the whole Church of God is vilified, and God himself also is blasphemed, as approving and justifying the iniquity that has been committed.]

3. In religious persons towards the world—

[It would be well if this partiality in judging were confined to the ungodly: but there is a great tendency to it in those who profess religion. Doubtless in proportion as real humility is formed in the heart, this evil disposition will be mortified: but in proportion as pride and conceit are unsubdued, the attendant evil of uncharitableness will betray itself. We have a most remarkable example of this in David, when he had relapsed into a state of grievous departure from God. When Nathan told him of a man who had taken a poor man's lamb

behold, nothing would suffice to expiate the crime but the forfeiture of life itself: so atrocious did this light offence appear, when all his own unparalleled enormities were forgotten. We grant that this was a very extreme case; and that nothing like it is commonly to be imputed to those who profess religion: but is there not amongst many professors an utter contempt of the ungodly? Do they not frequently speak of their irreligious neighbours with contemptuous asperity, as wretched, blind, carnal creatures? The Jews designated the Gentiles as dogs, and as cursed; whilst they fancied themselves the chosen people of God: and is not a great deal of the same spirit to be seen amongst what are called the religious world? The ignorance and ungodliness of the men of this world are at once conceded as just grounds of their eternal condemnation; whilst the pride and uncharitableness, and ten thousand other evils that are found but too frequently amongst these contemptuous professors, are passed over as venial, or perhaps as having no existence in their hearts. How different was the lesson taught us by our Lord, who, when the Rich Youth came to inquire of him the way to heaven, "*loved him*," notwithstanding he knew that the love of earthly things would ultimately overcome all those better desires which occupied his mind! Our divine Master *loved him* for the good that was in him, though he foresaw it would prove ineffectual for the final welfare of his soul: whereas the great mass of religious professors would have lost sight of all the good that was in him, and have treated him with unqualified contempt. But among those who with great confidence "cry, Lord, Lord," there are many who will be found in as bad a condition as he: and the Disciple who betrayed our Lord with a kiss, will be found in no happier plight, than they who apprehended him with swords and staves.]

4. In religious people towards each other—

[Strange as it may seem, the different sects of religious people are as ready to anathematize each other, as to condemn those who cast off all religion. It is even an avowed tenet in the Church of Rome, that they who are not of her communion cannot be saved. And there is not a little of that same bigotry existing amongst the different professors of the Protestant faith. To be of their party is almost of itself a qualification for heaven; and a dissent from it a preparative for hell. Blessed be God! this intolerant spirit has of late years greatly abated[a]: but still it prevails to an awful extent, and gives but too just occasion for sceptics and infidels to triumph. But even amongst persons of the same religious community this propensity to judge and condemn one another greatly prevails. The weak

[a] Since the establishment of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

will judge the strong, and the strong despise the weak. Persons, whose situations totally disqualify them for estimating aright the conduct of others who are differently circumstanced, will yet take upon them to determine with confidence the line of conduct that should be pursued, and to pass a sentence of condemnation on those who walk not in the way that seems good to them. In truth, there are but few who do not need that reproof: "Who art thou that judgest another? To his own Master he standeth or falleth."]

Thus we see to whom the expostulation in our text is addressed; namely, to all who "judge others, whilst they themselves do the same things," or things equally reprehensible. We proceed now to,

II. Consider the address itself—

This is extremely pointed. The interrogations shew how fearfully these persons delude themselves. The address is, in fact, an appeal to the consciences of the persons addressed; and it constitutes them judges in their own cause. It shews to all such uncharitable persons, what an awful state they themselves are in:

1. How vain their hopes!

[All the fore-mentioned characters imagine, that they themselves have nothing to fear: but they are all in a state displeasing to God, "whose judgment is according to truth against them that do such things[b]." Can any man suppose that a mere profession of religion will pass with God for the actual experience of it in the heart? or that a forwardness to condemn others will be a substitute for the performance of our own duties? Will God form his judgment upon the partial grounds which we take for the forming of ours? Will he admit as just the estimate which we have made of our own character, or be content to try us by the standard which we have used in trying ourselves? No: his law is perfect; and by that he will try all to whom that law has been revealed. He will weigh us all in the balance of the sanctuary; he will "try the hearts," and "weigh the spirits," of the children of men: he will "not judge according to the appearance, but will judge righteous judgment." We appeal then to all, shall these uncharitable hypocrites escape? O thou, who hast thus deceived thyself hitherto, what dost thou now think? Thinkest thou, that, because thou knowest more than others, or makest a greater profession of religion than others, thou shalt escape? Know, that such a hope is vain: "*We are sure*[c]," that, if thou

[b] ver. 2. [c] ver. 2.

humble not thyself as an undone sinner, and flee not for refuge to the Lord Jesus Christ, the vengeance of God shall overtake thee; and thou shalt experience the fate which thou art so ready to award to others.]

2. How aggravated their guilt!

[God has graciously exercised much "forbearance and long-suffering" towards thee; and thou takest occasion from thence to conclude well of thy state, and to sit in judgment upon others who appear less favoured than thyself. But is this the end for which God has borne with thee, and displayed towards thee all the riches of his goodness? Was not *that* the proper tendency of all "his goodness?" Should it not have humbled thee as unworthy such mercy? Should it not have filled thy heart with gratitude for such distinguishing favour? Should it not have quickened thee to return to God, and to requite him to the best of thy power? Consider, "O man," whether such be not the improvement which thou shouldst have made of all these mercies? and ask thyself, whether the neglecting to improve them thus be not in fact to "despise them?" Yes: in overlooking thine own sins, and in passing judgment upon others, thou art "hardening thyself in impenitence," and pouring contempt on God himself. Alas! thou hast little thought what guilt thou hast been contracting. Thou worldly man that judgest the religious, and thou religious man that judgest the world, when wilt thou turn thy thoughts inward, and pass judgment on thyself? Know that, till thou art brought to a more equitable spirit, as it respects thyself, and a more charitable spirit as it respects thy neighbour, thou art a despiser of God, an usurper of his prerogative, and "a judge of the law itself," even of that law whereby thou thyself art to be judged[d]. But this most awfully augments thy guilt, and prepares thee daily for a more aggravated condemnation.]

3. How fearful their prospects!

[There is "a day wherein God will judge the world in righteousness." Man has his day[e], and God has his[f]. The present is a day of *grace:* but that which is coming is "a day of *wrath.*" What a fearful appellation is this! a day of *wrath!* or, as it is elsewhere called, "*the day of the perdition* of ungodly men[g]!" O hear it, and tremble, all ye who are judging others, and neglecting to judge yourselves. Against this day ye are heaping up wrath: ye are adding to the mass day by day: load upon load, mountain upon mountain, ye are piling up;

[d] Jam. iv. 11.
[e] 1 Cor. iv. 3. See the Greek.
[f] 1 Cor. iv. 5.
[g] 2 Pet. iii. 7.

and under this accumulated weight must your souls lie to all eternity. Ah! little do you think what your employment is: little do you think what shall be the issue of all your impenitence and obduracy. But thus it will be. That day is appointed expressly with a view to "the revealing," and displaying before the assembled universe, "the righteous judgment of God." Every sin that is committed will then be brought to light; "and every one will be judged according to what he hath done in the body, whether it be good or evil." Then, whether ye will or not, your attention shall be fixed upon *your own* sins: you will have nothing to do then with the sins *of others*. O! begin *now*, whilst time is afforded you, to search out *your own* iniquities, and to seek the remission of them through the blood of Christ.]

We will conclude this awful subject with a few words of ADVICE—

1. Do not occupy yourselves too much about others, but rather take heed unto yourselves—

[There are situations, no doubt, wherein we are called to judge: nor are we ever so to lay aside the office of judging, as to think well of those who are guilty of all manner of sin; or to commit ourselves to those, whom we have good reason to think treacherous and deceitful. Nor need we so forbear judging, as to be satisfied with the state of those who live in a total neglect of God and of their own souls. On the contrary, we ought to weep over them, and pray for them, and to labour by all possible means for their salvation. But our chief concern must be with ourselves. Here our scrutiny cannot be too exact, or our anxiety too great. Here we should be afraid of entertaining a good opinion on insufficient grounds. We should judge ourselves, that we may not be judged of the Lord. Search then, and try your every way: and, not venturing to trust your own efforts, pray earnestly to God, and say, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting[h]."]

2. Above all things, seek to know your perishing need of a Saviour—

[This is the grand scope of the Apostle's argument: he is endeavouring to convince all, both Jews and Gentiles, that they stand in need of the salvation which Christ has purchased for us by his own blood. There is in the generality a fear of seeing themselves in too humiliating a point of view: but this can never be: the more we are abased in our own eyes, the

[h] Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24.

more we shall be exalted in the sight of God. It is "the sick that need the physician:" and the more sensible we are of our disorder, the more we shall value the Lord Jesus Christ. Were there indeed any doubt of his sufficiency to save us, we might well be afraid of viewing our sins in all their extent: "his blood will cleanse from all sin;" and "he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." In him all fulness dwells: and you need not be afraid of seeing yourselves "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," when you hear him counselling you to come to him for "gold that shall enrich you, and clothing that shall cover you, and eye-salve that shall restore your sight[1]." Be nothing, yea, "less than nothing," in yourselves; and He will be to you all that your heart can desire, "your wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."]

[1] Rev. iii. 17, 18.

MDCCCXXV.

THE RULE OF GOD'S FUTURE JUDGMENT.

Rom. ii. 6—11. *Who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God.*

IN reading the apostolic writings we should attend, not only to the doctrines that are inculcated, but to the manner in which they are inculcated; for writing, as the Apostles did, entirely under the influence of love, they have given us many valuable lessons, which escape the notice of the superficial observer, but amply repay the search of those who investigate them with deeper attention, and desire to imbibe their spirit. It is of no small importance to learn how to combat prejudice with success. This is rarely done by an open and direct attack: it is far better to attempt it by a more circuitous mode, namely, by establishing such truths as shall serve to

give juster views to the mind. In this way the fabric of error, which would have withstood any rude assault, is undermined, and falls, ere the person who defended it is aware of any opposition. The Jews were strongly possessed with the notion, that no Jew could perish, except through apostasy or idolatry; and that no Gentile could be saved, but by subjecting himself to the institutions and observances of the Mosaic ritual. To counteract this error, the Apostle shews, that the Jews, no less than the Gentiles, stood in need of a Saviour, and must embrace the Gospel in order to their final salvation. But to this conclusion he comes by gradual, and almost imperceptible, advances; shewing, that God, as a righteous Judge, will deal with all according to their works, without shewing partiality to any on account of their external privileges, or leaving any to suffer on account of their external disadvantages, but awarding equally to all such a sentence as their respective characters shall require. This is a truth so obvious and incontrovertible, that they could not but acquiesce in it; and, by a due consideration of it, they would be prepared to embrace all that the Apostle was about to advance on the subject which he was especially commissioned to proclaim, the admission of all, both Jews and Gentiles, on an equal footing, into the Church of Christ.

But, in stating the rule which God would observe in the future judgment, the Apostle designed further to convey the most important information to the whole world: for, as all must one day stand at the judgment-seat of Christ, it is of infinite importance for all to know on what grounds their eternal state will be determined.

To leave no doubt on this subject, he fully states,

I. The character and end of the godly—

Mark,

1. Their character—

[The godly man is known by *the object* he pursues. Nothing less than "glory, and honour, and immortality" will satisfy him: not the glory and honour which pertain to this life; not the immortality which consists in posthumous fame:

those he leaves for others: his ambition soars to higher things; the things worthy of an immortal soul; even to the everlasting possession of all the glory and felicity of heaven. This is the prize which he sees held out to him in the Scriptures: and for the attainment of it he strains every nerve. He well knows how richly it will recompense all his labours and toils; and every thing in comparison of it is regarded by him as the small dust upon the balance.

He is further known by *the means he uses to attain it:* he seeks it "by a patient continuance in well-doing." Whatever he believes to be the will of God, he does. Has God commanded him to humble himself as a sinner, and to flee to Christ as to the refuge that is set before him? he does it; he does it heartily; he does it humbly; he does it continually. Has God further ordered him "no longer to live unto himself, but unto Him that died for him and rose again?" he endeavours to consecrate all his faculties and all his powers to the service of his adorable Redeemer. He is not satisfied with doing such good works as the men of this world are wont to perform; his efforts extend to all the most difficult and self-denying duties, as well those which are loaded with opprobrium, as those which elevate us in the good opinion of mankind — — — And this he does with "a patient continuance," prosecuting, like the sun in the firmament, his destined course, and causing all who behold his light, to glorify God in his behalf. There are times indeed when the difficulties and discouragements which he meets with oppress his mind: his hands sometimes hang down, and his feeble knees seem as if they would no longer sustain the weight they have to bear. But he looks up to God for help: he obtains fresh supplies of grace and strength from above; and, with vigour renewed like the eagle's, he resumes his course, determined never to stop, till he has obtained the prize.

In accomplishing the work assigned him, he finds also opposition from without. Much as the ungodly world profess to honour good works, they do not like such works as Christ performed, or such as all his faithful followers perform: they do all they can to obstruct the Christian's path; and if he will proceed in it, they will revile and persecute him, even as they did the Lord of Glory himself. But he "endures hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ," and "counts not his life dear to him, if only he may be enabled to finish his course with joy," and to complete the work which God has given him to do.]

2. Their end—

[God never suffers his faithful servants to be disappointed of their hope. Do they seek "eternal life" as their one object? "eternal life" shall be theirs: "the glory and honour"

which they sought shall be awarded to them, and shall be enjoyed by them in a degree, of which, whilst here, they had no conception. "Peace" also, even a perfect freedom from all those conflicts which so often troubled them in this world, will be theirs in full and everlasting possession. Whilst they were here, their "peace passed all understanding, and kept their hearts and minds as in a citadel," out of the reach of all their enemies: but in the future world, their reconciliation with God will be so perfect, and their rest in God so complete, that their peace will flow down like a river, with ever-increasing amplitude and abundance to all eternity.]

In perfect contrast with the foregoing are,

II. The character and end of the ungodly—

Their character is the very reverse of that before considered—

[It might be thought that an obedience to the Gospel was not intended to be included in the "well-doing" of the godly: but here the want of it is particularly marked as a leading feature of the ungodly. In fact, "the souls of men can only be purified by obeying the truth through the Spirit[a];" and all who are born again of the Spirit, that is, all the children of God, are so purified. But the ungodly are averse to the truth; they are "contentious, and will not obey it:" and this arises, not from any want of evidence in the truth itself, but from the predominance of some unrighteous principle, towards which they feel a decided preference, and to which they yield a willing subjection. Some, through the pride of their hearts, reject *the principles* of the Gospel: whilst others, through the love of this present evil world, or through the prevalence of unmortified lusts, refuse submission to *its precepts*: the principles are too humiliating; the precepts too difficult and self-denying. It is not necessary that a person, in order to be numbered with the ungodly, should commit such crimes as are reprobated by the world around him: he may be blameless as to his external conduct in the sight of men, and yet be very ungodly in the sight of God: his aversion to "the truth as it is in Jesus" constitutes him a most flagrant sinner before God, and subjects him to God's heaviest displeasure[b].]

Their end will be more awful than either language can express, or heart conceive—

[They dream of being in the favour of God: but they are objects of his "indignation and wrath." They persuade themselves that they shall be happy in the eternal world: but

[a] 1 Pet. i. 22. [b] 2 Thess. i. 8. and 1 Pet. iv. 17.

"tribulation and anguish" will be their certain and unalterable portion[c]. O! who can conceive what it is to be "cast into a lake of fire and brimstone," and to "dwell with everlasting burnings?" Alas! what "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth" will there be in those regions to which the ungodly will be for ever consigned! Yes: "to *every* soul that doeth evil," shall this sentence be awarded. "No respect will be shewn to persons" on account of their name, or profession, or rank, or distinctions of any kind. The Jew will have a priority to the Gentiles, both in respect of happiness and misery; of happiness, inasmuch as his peculiar privileges afford him greater advantages for the attainment of holiness; though the Gentile shall not be overlooked on account of his want of those advantages. In like manner the Jew will have a fearful precedence also in respect to punishment, on account of the advantages he has abused: but the Gentiles will according to their measure be punished also, if they have not walked agreeably to the light which they have enjoyed[d]. The possession of privileges will prove a blessing, or a curse, according to the use that has been made of them; but the want of privileges shall neither excuse deliberate wickedness, on the one hand, nor prevent the acceptance of willing, though imperfect, services, on the other hand. If God, on the one hand, will "take vengeange on them that know him not," he has, on the other hand, declared, that "in every nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, shall be accepted of him."]

From this subject then we may LEARN,

1. What the Gospel is—

[Many imagine that such declarations as those in our text are altogether *legal*. But the apostle Paul, who surely understood the Gospel, considered these declarations as an essential part of it: and it is worthy of notice, that, in the very epistle where he has most strongly advanced the doctrines of predestination and election, he has brought forward these truths, which are so often set in opposition to them. But the Gospel is not such a partial system as is generally imagined: it neither consists exclusively in those doctrines which are commonly spoken of under the term Calvinism, nor in those which are supposed to have an Arminian aspect. The Gospel exhibits the Deity to us under different views; first, as *a merciful Father*, who offers salvation to us through the blood and righteousness of his only-begotten Son; next, as *an almighty Sovereign*, who dispenses his blessings according to his own will and pleasure; and lastly, as *a righteous Judge*, who will proceed with perfect equity in assigning to every man his

[c] Compare Ps. lxxviii. 49. with Ps. xi. 6. [d] Luke xii. 47, 48.

proper portion of happiness or misery, according to what he has done in the body, whether it be good or evil. Under all these characters God must be viewed: if any one be excluded, his Gospel is mutilated, and his glory obscured. Let us then be equally ready to view him under any of these characters. Let us look to him for a full salvation through the death of his Son: if made partakers of that salvation, let us give all the glory to his free grace, and his electing love: and then let us walk before him in a conscientious performance of every duty, under a firm expectation, that our final sentence shall be according to the dictates of perfect equity. This is to be in the spirit of the Gospel; and if any restrict it to more partial views, they only betray their ignorance or pride, and will find themselves awfully mistaken in the last day.]

2. How to estimate our own character—

[The persons who have such an exclusive fondness of the deeper doctrines of predestination and election, are ready to pour contempt on *evidences*, as though an inquiry into the evidences of our conversion were mere legality. A favourite notion with them is, *that faith is the* ONLY *evidence of faith.* But this is a grievous error. That faith does carry its own evidence along with it, just as love, or any other grace does, we readily allow. A person who relies simply and entirely on God, has a consciousness that he does so, and may, *if this consciousness be confirmed by other evidence*, be assured that his faith is genuine. But men may have a full persuasion in their own minds that they are right, and yet may be under a fatal delusion. This was the case with Paul, whilst he persecuted the Church of Christ: he "*verily thought* that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus." The Scriptures furnish us with unnumbered marks whereby to judge of our state. The Epistles of St. John are full of them[e]; and our blessed Lord cautions us strongly against that presumptuous confidence that would exclude an appeal to them[f]: he bids us judge of ourselves by the fruits that we produce[g]; and assures us, that in this way only can we guard against final disappointment and everlasting ruin[h]. To all then would we say, examine whether you are proceeding in "a patient continuance in well-doing:" for the Judge himself will assuredly at the last day institute a strict inquiry into your works, and determine your state according to them[i]: and "whatever you have sown, that, and that only, shall you reap to all eternity[k]."]

[e] See 1 John iii. 10, 14, 19—21, 24. [f] Matt. vii. 21—23.
[g] Matt. vii. 16—20. [h] Matt. vii. 24—27.
[i] Matt. xxv. 31—46. [k] Gal. vi. 7, 8.

3. How to secure the prize that is set before you—

[Not only is this plainly told us in our text; but St. Paul elsewhere says expressly, "Be not weary in well-doing; for in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not[l]." St. John also inculcates the same salutary lesson, as our Lord also does in the parable of the Sower[m], both, in effect, saying, look to yourselves, that ye "lose not those things which ye have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward[n]." That we must live altogether by faith in the Son of God, is certain; for it is from his fulness alone that we can receive any spiritual blessing: but still we must exert ourselves as much, as if salvation were the fruit and recompence of our own efforts alone. This matter is put in a just light by St. Paul, when he says, "Let us cast away every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us *run with patience* the race that is set before us, *looking unto Jesus*, the author and finisher of our faith[o]." In humble dependence on him to assist our efforts, and in an entire reliance on his meritorious sacrifice as the only ground of our acceptance, we must press forward in our heavenly course: then may we with confidence expect "a recompence of reward," not indeed for any merit in our services, but in exact proportion to them. The men of this world may seek for glory and honour, and be disappointed: but no disappointment shall occur to us: "The wicked worketh a deceitful work; but to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward[p]."]

[l] Gal. vi. 9.
[m] Luke viii. 15. "*Bring forth fruit with patience.*"
[n] 2 John, ver. 8. [o] Heb. xii. 1, 2. [p] Prov. xi. 18.

MDCCCXXVI.

INCONSISTENT CHRISTIANS REMONSTRATED WITH.

Rom. ii. 17—23. *Behold, thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?*

IT is generally acknowledged, that the heart of man is deceitful: but the extent of its deceitfulness is very little known. It is not in things of minor importance only that its delusive operations are felt, but in things of everlasting concern, where, it might be supposed, we should be most on our guard against them. It deceives us in things relating to God, who, however we may deceive ourselves, can never be deceived by us: it leads us to substitute a profession of religion for the actual experience of it in our souls; and to rest in a form of godliness, whilst we are wholly inattentive to its power. This species of self-deceit obtained to an awful degree amongst the Jews, with whom St. Paul expostulates on account of it in a way of keen remonstrance. They could not be persuaded that they were in any danger, because they were descended from Abraham; but St. Paul shews them, that their descent from him would avail them nothing, whilst their conduct was so contrary to their professions; but that rather their hypocrisy proved them to be as much in need of a Saviour, as the most ignorant of the Gentile world could be.

Such being the general scope of the passage, we will consider more particularly,

I. The remonstrance itself—

Certainly the state of the Jews called for severe reproof—

[*They were highly privileged beyond the rest of mankind.* They had a revelation from heaven, whereby they were instructed in the mind and will of God[a], and enabled both to "discern things that differed," and to "approve the things that were more excellent[b]." Moreover, as God's peculiar people, they could call Jehovah *their* God.

But these privileges they grievously abused. We condemn not their "resting in the law," or their "making their boast of God," provided they had really endeavoured to serve God acceptably, and to yield a willing obedience to his law: but it was the external privilege that they gloried in, and not the spiritual advantages derived from it: they were proud of the distinction, but not desirous of the spiritual benefits connected

[a] Deut. iv. 8.

[b] δοκιμάζεις τὰ διαφέροντα may be translated in either way.

with it. Because of the superior light they enjoyed, they despised all the rest of the world, as blind, ignorant, benighted: and they assumed to themselves vain-glorious titles, as "guides of the blind, lights of those who were in darkness, instructors of the foolish, and teachers of babes:" they had a summary of their duties in a short compendious form, "a form of knowledge and of the truth in the law," by means of which they were enabled to appear very wise to the unenlightened heathen; but, whilst they thought themselves so highly qualified to "teach others, they taught not themselves:" on the contrary, they were notoriously guilty of those very crimes which they reprobated amongst the Gentile world. They proclaimed with great authority the commandments, "Thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not commit adultery;" but they were as much addicted to these crimes as the heathen themselves; and though since their return from Babylon they professed an abhorrence of idolatry, and *in that respect* excelled the heathen, they sacrilegiously robbed God not only of his tithes and offerings, but of all that honour and obedience which they acknowledged to be his due. In a word, by their gross hypocrisy, and their diversified abominations, they caused Jehovah himself to be blasphemed and abhorred amongst the heathen who were round about them[c].

Of what avail could external privileges be to such hypocrites as these?]

Would to God there were not equal cause for reproof to those also who name the name of Christ—

[*Great as were the advantages of the Jews, they were not to be compared with those which are enjoyed by the Christian world.* We have not the law only, but the Gospel also, in which are discovered to us all the wonders of redeeming love. And we, in consequence of this distinction, look down with pity on the benighted heathen, who are bowing down to stocks and stones, and seeking to propitiate their deities by services most painful, most nugatory, most debasing. On the Christian name also we value ourselves, as if that name could save us: and because we have been admitted by baptism into the external bond of the Christian covenant, we conclude ourselves of course partakers also of its inward blessings. Ah! fatal delusion! We stand amazed at this error, when exhibited to us by the Jews; but behold it not, when exemplified in ourselves.

But our lives testify against us, as no less hypocritical than the Jews themselves. Were we really a holy people to the Lord, we might well "make our boast of the Saviour," and "rest in his Gospel" as an undoubted source of everlasting

[c] Isai. lii. 5. Ezek. xxxvi. 21—23.

blessedness. But whilst we boast of our superiority to the heathen in point of light and knowledge, we are on a perfect level with them in our allowed violations of every moral duty. We say to heathens, "Thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not commit adultery:" but where were ever fornication and adultery practised with more unblushing effrontery, than amongst those who name the name of Christ? Where was dishonesty more universal in every branch of trade, than amongst those who call themselves Christians? Who have ever carried dishonesty to such a pitch as the professed followers of Christ? Who have been men-stealers? Who have stirred up wars from year to year, on purpose to facilitate their projects of enslaving their fellow-creatures? Ah! tell it not in Gath. The very name of Christ stinks in the nostrils of millions, who have been the victims of our rapacity. "Me no Christian," is, in the mind of an African, a severer reproach to us than any other that language can express. And, at this day, there is an anniversary held in the island of Japan for the purpose of trampling on the cross, which the Jesuits of former days have made an object of universal abhorrence.]

Happy should we be, if this reproof were to be confined to merely nominal Christians!

[Amongst religious professors, who have the Gospel fully and faithfully administered to them, there are many whose superior light and information serves only to puff them up with false confidence and vain conceit. They look down with affected pity on those whose views of divine truth are not so clear as their own; whilst yet, in respect of truth, and honour, and integrity, they are far inferior to the persons whom they despise. It is common for such persons to set up for teachers, whilst they themselves need to be taught some of the first and fundamental rules of Christian duty. That professors of religion are too indiscriminately, and too severely, judged, is certain: but it is no less certain, that there is too much reason for complaint given by many, who, under a cloak of religion, veil, or attempt to veil, the grossest hypocrisy. Deceit, and lying, and covetousness, and fraud, and petulance, and idleness, and many other evils, are not unfrequently found predominant features in persons professing godliness; insomuch that the very profession of piety is brought by them into general disrepute, till, by a long probation, a man shall have established his character for integrity and truth. The dishonour they reflect on God, and the injury they do to "the Gospel of Christ, which is evil spoken of through them," is more than words can express: but against such persons no remonstrance can be too pointed, no censure can be too severe.]

To view the remonstrance in its true light, we must further consider,

II. The argument confirmed by it—

The general argument is, to convince the Jews of sin: but more particularly it was the Apostle's design to shew,

1. The emptiness of a merely nominal religion—

[The Jews valued themselves on their descent from Abraham, and on their external relation to God as his peculiar people. We in like manner value ourselves on being Christians and Protestants: and we, purely on this ground, entertain as little doubt of our salvation, as the Jews did of theirs. But St. Paul tells the Jews, that the uncircumcised Gentiles, who walked according to the light they enjoyed, would fare better in the eternal world than the disobedient Jews, notwithstanding all their boasted privileges[d]. And, no doubt, many heathens are in an incomparably better state than the great mass of the Christians, who in their life and conversation disgrace the truth which they profess. We must go further still, and say, that many, who have walked humbly and conscientiously before God, will, notwithstanding the comparative darkness of their views, rise up in judgment against those, who, with their clearer views, and more confident professions of faith in Christ, have walked unworthy of their heavenly calling. Yes; many that, according to human estimation, are "last, shall be first; and many that in their own conceit are first, shall be last."]

2. The criminality of an inconsistent profession—

[A profession of love to God and his law only involves us in deeper guilt, if it be not accompanied with a suitable conversation. Much as God hates wickedness in general, there is nothing so odious in his sight as hypocrisy. Against none did our blessed Lord denounce such woes as against hypocrites; "Woe unto you hypocrites!" and to "take our portion with the hypocrites" is to have the severest lot of all in the eternal world. Think then, ye who call yourselves Christians, what a portion awaits you, if, whilst you name the name of Christ, you depart not from iniquity. Say not, that ye do not make any profession of religion; for your very calling of yourselves Christians, is a public avowal, that Christ is your Redeemer, and your Lord. What if ye were warned that you should be refused the rites of Christian burial? would you deem that no insult? Yet it is only on the presumption that you are Christians indeed, that your bodies are

[d] ver. 27.

committed to the grave in faith and hope. You do then, and you cannot but, make a profession of faith in Christ, and of obedience to his revealed will: and, if you will not walk as becometh the Gospel of Christ, "your circumcision shall become uncircumcision," your baptism no baptism, and your end terrible, in proportion to the advantages you have abused.

But to a still greater extent is this true respecting those, who, whilst they make their boast of the Gospel, dishonour God by their unholy lives, or unsanctified dispositions. To what purpose are their public professions, or social exercises? To what purpose are all their boasted experiences of alternate elevation and depression, of fear or confidence, of sorrow or of joy? They may profess as they will that they know God; but, if in their conduct they deny him, "they deceive their own souls, and their religion is vain." Extremely awful is that declaration of God to the Church of Smyrna, "I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan[e]." And it is to be feared, that such synagogues are yet to be found in our land, under the semblance of Christian Churches and religious societies. But whatever *they* may think of their professions, God accounts them "blasphemy," and those who make them will be dealt with by him as hypocrites and blasphemers. We would not speak of this, but with weeping[f]; nevertheless we must declare it, because it is the very truth of God[g].]

3. The universal need of a Saviour—

[All, both Jews and Gentiles, are under sin, and therefore need an interest in the Saviour. Yea, the best of men must perish, if they be not washed in the Redeemer's blood. For who is there, that has not occasion to humble himself for his manifold infirmities? Who is there that has acted in all things up to his profession? Who could stand, if God should enter into judgment with him? Yea, "if God should lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet," who could answer him for any one act or thought of his whole life? Know then, that we are all in this respect on a level: we must all "put our hand on our mouth, and our mouth in the dust, crying, Unclean, unclean:" we must all desire with St. Paul to be found in Christ, not having our own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God by faith in Christ."]

EXHORTATION—

We call on all then, as they value their immortal souls,

1. To embrace the Gospel—

[e] Rev. ii. 9. [f] Phil. iii. 18, 19. [g] Hos. viii. 2, 3.

[Do not attempt to substitute any thing of your own in the place of it. Your privileges, your professions, your experiences, your attainments; you must consider them all but as "loss and dung in comparison of Christ." Let it not appear a hard thing to renounce them all in point of dependence; but "submit" willingly and thankfully "to the righteousness of God." It is strange that the acceptance of a free salvation should require any submission at all: but our proud hearts are averse to stoop to such an humiliating way of coming unto God. But be content to have nothing in yourselves, and all in Christ: then shall you be glorified in him, and he in you, to all eternity.]

2. To adorn the Gospel—

[It is no small measure of holiness that becomes those who believe in Christ. They should endeavour "to shine as lights in a dark world[h];" to "walk worthy of their high calling;" yea, "worthy also of him that hath called them to his kingdom and glory." They should seek to be "holy as He is holy," and "perfect as He is perfect." Doubtless those who preach to others should, like the shepherds of old, go before their flocks in every thing that is excellent and praiseworthy: they should be "examples, not to the world only, but to believers also, in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in love, in purity[i]." They should be able to say to others, "Whatsoever ye have seen and heard in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you." Would to God that he who now is endeavouring to teach you, may himself learn, and exemplify, these lessons more than he has ever yet done! ——— But the duty of holiness pertains equally to all. O be persuaded to press after the highest attainments in it, and so to make your light shine before men, that all who behold you may be constrained to glorify God in your behalf.]

[h] Phil. ii. 15. Matt. vii. 13—16. [i] 1 Tim. iv. 12.

MDCCCXXVII.

THE NATURE AND EXCELLENCE OF TRUE RELIGION.

Rom. ii. 28, 29. *He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

IF we were to estimate men's religion by the degree of confidence which they expressed, we should be

ready to think that the glory of the latter day were already arrived, so universal are men's claims to Christian knowledge and experience. But it is often found, that, where there is the strongest confidence, there is the least ground for it. None could ever be more firmly persuaded of their acceptance with God than the carnal Jews; yet were they fatally mistaken: for though they enjoyed many privileges, and abounded in outward observances, they were destitute of that vital principle, without which their religion was a vain ceremony, an empty form.

In the preceding context the Apostle is proving to the Jews that *they* stood in need of a Saviour no less than the idolatrous Gentiles: and, knowing what a stress they laid upon their outward privileges, he tells them, that it was not an outward and carnal, but an inward and spiritual service that God required, and that was necessary to justify their pretensions to the Divine favour.

His words naturally lead us to shew,

I. The vanity of a mere outward and nominal religion—

All are apt to rest in external forms—

[There is nothing in mere forms, which does not gratify, rather than counteract, our natural tendency to self-righteousness, and self-applause. Hence arises that universal readiness to substitute something that is of an external nature, in the place of vital godliness. The Jews valued themselves on their descent from Abraham, and on their admission into covenant with God by the right of circumcision: they also boasted of the law in which they were instructed, and of the ordinances wherein they drew nigh to God: and such was their dependence on these things, that they would not suffer themselves to doubt one moment their title to heaven. Precisely such also are the grounds on which the generality of Christians hope to obtain eternal happiness: they have been born of Christian parents, devoted to God in baptism, instructed in the truths of the Gospel, and brought up in a constant attendance, if not on the Lord's supper, at least on the other ordinances of religion. If they can boast thus far, they will conclude that all is well with them, and that their salvation is quite secure.]

But the form of godliness without its power is of no avail—

[Testimonies to this effect are exceeding numerous and strong. John the Baptist particularly cautioned the Jews against trusting in their descent from Abraham[a]: our Lord also warned his hearers, that though they were Abraham's children after the flesh, they could not be considered as the seed to whom the promises were made, because they did not the works of Abraham[b]. St. Paul also, having enumerated the great and glorious privileges to which the Jews were entitled, yet declares that "all were not Israel who were of Israel," and that the spiritual seed alone should be partakers of the promises[c].

However therefore our knowledge of divine truth be enlarged, or our outward services be multiplied, we can never be admitted into God's sanctuary, unless we have a better righteousness than the Scribes and Pharisees attained[d]: we may indeed, "have a name to live; but we are really dead[e]."]

In confirmation of this point we proceed to state,

II. The nature and excellence of true religion—

True religion extends its influence to the inmost dispositions of the soul—

[Circumcision and baptism are mere signs and shadowy representations of something inward and spiritual; they are intended to lead our minds to "the circumcision of the heart," and "the washing of regeneration[f]." True religion rests not "in the letter of the law," but goes to "the spirit" of it; and inclines the heart to an uniform, unreserved compliance with the will of God. God himself has informed us fully upon this point; "Neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision, but a new creation[g]. The renovation of our inward man after the Divine image, is that which alone constituted a person a Jew in God's estimation; nor is any thing less than this necessary to constitute *us* Christians in the sight of God. Without this, the circumcision of the Jew was a mere concision; and the baptism of the Christian is a worthless ablution[h].]

Wherever this operates, God looks upon it with pleasure and delight—

[Man's approbation is confined to the outward forms of religion; the life and power of which are reprobated by him as hypocrisy and enthusiasm. But God, who sees the emptiness of mere outward services through the specious veil that is

[a] Matt. iii. 9. [b] John viii. 39. [c] Rom. ix. 4—8.
[d] Matt. v. 20. [e] Rev. iii. 1.
[f] Compare Deut. x. 16. and xxx. 6. with Col. ii. 11, 13. and Tit. iii. 5.
[g] Gal. vi. 15. κτίσις. [h] Phil. iii. 2, 3. 1 Pet.

put upon them, beholds also the intrinsic worth of those dispositions which are cultivated by the true Christian. The sighs and groans of a penitent are as a sweet-smelling savour unto God; while the self-exalting thoughts and expressions of a proud Pharisee are as an offensive "smoke in his nose," which excites nothing but disgust and abhorrence[i]. Nor is there a good desire rising in the bosom from a principle of pure religion, but it is instantly noted in the book of God's remembrance[k], and shall be recorded to the Christian's honour in the great day of our Lord's appearing[l]]

ADDRESS—

1. Those who are resting in outward forms—

[Persons who are diligent in external duties, never doubt but that they are true Christians: but if they be not equally attentive to their inward motives and principles, God himself tells us that they are no Christians. Let us then inquire, not whether we be descended from Christian ancestors, but whether we be born of God? Let us ask, not whether we have "cleansed the outside of the cup and platter;" but whether we are "purified from all spiritual as well as fleshly filthiness[m]?" And let us remember, that "the King's daughters are all glorious *within*;" and that their brightest ornament is "the hidden man of the heart[n]:" nor is it he who commendeth himself that is approved of God, "but he whom the Lord commendeth[o]."]

2. Those who disregard religion entirely—

[It has already been seen that persons may be Christians in appearance, and very observant of all the ordinances of religion, while yet they are no Christians in the sight of God: how far then must they be from deserving this appellation, who habitually violate the commandments of their Divine Master, and live in a constant neglect of the most acknowledged duties! Surely "their circumcision is become uncircumcision;" instead of being Jews "they are of the synagogue of Satan:" and the unbaptized heathen, who walk agreeably to the light of nature, shall condemn them, who, having been baptized into the faith of Christ, are yet despising his authority, and trampling on his laws[p]. Let then the very name of Christian be renounced at once, or let the spirit of Christianity be made apparent in our lives.]

3. Those who are cultivating a spiritual and heavenly mind—

[i] Jer. xxxi. 18, 20. Isai. lxv. 5. See also Luke xviii. 11—14.
[k] Mal. iii. 16, 17. [l] 1 Pet. i. 7. 1 Cor. iv. 5.
[m] 2 Cor. vii. 1. [n] Ps. xlv. 13. 1 Pet. iii. 4.
[o] 2 Cor. x. 18. [p] ver. 25—27. with Rev. ii. 9.

[Amidst the abounding of iniquity there yet are many who are devoted to God both in heart and life: and unspeakably blessed is their state. "Their praise indeed is not of men:" by men they are derided as enthusiasts and fanatics: but they have "praise of God." God beholds them with pleasure, and forbears to destroy the world for their sake[q]. He accounts them his servants, his children, his glory[r]; and in a little time he will welcome them to his bright abodes, saying, "Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord." At the day of judgment too will the Lord Jesus Christ confess them before his Father and his holy angels; "These were Christians indeed; they followed me in the regeneration, and shall therefore now be seated on thrones of glory: as I have already shewn my mercy to them, so will I now evince my righteousness in them; they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy[s]." Go on then, beloved, from grace to grace: never think that you have yet attained, or that you are already perfect; but forget all that is behind, and press forward for that which is before, knowing assuredly, that "to him who worketh righteousness shall be a sure reward."]

[q] Isai. i. 9. Matt. xxiv. 22. [r] Isai. xlvi. 13.
[s] Rev. iii. 4, 5.

MDCCCXXVIII.

CHRISTIANS' ADVANTAGES ABOVE HEATHENS.

Rom. iii. 1, 2. *What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way.*

IT is not easy to form a just estimate of the privileges attached to the profession of Christianity: we are ready either, on the one hand, to rate them too high, or, on the other, to undervalue and despise them. The Jews laid so great a stress on their relation to Abraham, that they could scarcely conceive it possible for them to perish: they concluded, that because they bore in their flesh the external seal of God's covenant, they must of necessity be partakers of its spiritual blessings: and when St. Paul shewed them their error, they indignantly replied, "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?" Thus many amongst ourselves are apt to imagine, that their having been admitted by

baptism into the Christian covenant will secure them an admission into heaven: and, when they are warned against this sad delusion, they are ready to say, that the heathen are in a happier state than they. In opposition to this, we propose to shew,

I. What advantages we, as Christians, have above the heathen—

The Apostle intimates, that the Jews, merely as Jews, possessed "every way much" advantage above the heathen: but, instead of descending to particulars, he contents himself with specifying one, which, as it was the greatest, so in fact it included all the rest, namely, that "to them were committed the Oracles of God." What he has stated thus comprehensively, we shall enter into more minutely.

We say then, that as Christians, we have many things to which the heathen are utter stangers: we have,

1. A guide for our faith—

[The oracles which the heathen consulted, were altogether unworthy of credit. Their answers were purposely given with such ambiguity, that they might appear to correspond with the event, whatever the event might be[a]. But our oracles have no such subterfuges: nor can we possibly err in giving to them the most implicit confidence. They declare to us the nature and perfections of God—the way which he has appointed for our reconciliation with him—the eternal state of those who shall embrace his proffered mercy, and of those who shall reject it. Of these things the heathen were wholly ignorant;

[a] A famous instance of this is mentioned by Herodotus, B. i.—Cyropædia, B. vii. Crœsus, king of Lydia, inquired of his gods, Whether he should make war against Cyrus? The Oracles answered, That he was then only to think himself in danger, when a mule should reign over the Medes; and that, on his passing over the river Halys, he should destroy a powerful kingdom. Relying on these answers as predicting success, he commenced the war, which speedily terminated in the ruin of himself and his whole kingdom: and when he complained that he had been deceived by the Oracles, he was told, That Cyrus was that mule (being a Persian by his father's side, and a Mede by his mother's); and that the kingdom which he was to destroy, was his own. See the account given in Prideaux's Connection of the Old and New Testament History.

nor could their oracles afford them any instruction on which they could rely.

What an amazing advantage then has the meanest Christian above the greatest of the heathen philosophers! The little volume which he has in his hand, sets before him innumerable truths, which reason never could explore; it reveals them to him so plainly, that he who runs may read and understand them: and, instead of deceiving him to his ruin, it will "make him wise unto everlasting salvation."]

2. A warrant for his hope—

[The oracles which could declare nothing with certainty, could afford to their votaries no solid ground of hope. But the Christian who believes the oracles of God, has an "anchor for his soul so sure and steadfast," that not all the storms or tempests which either men or devils can raise, shall ever drive him from the station where he is moored. Suppose his discouragements to be as great as the most gloomy imagination can paint them; he has reasons in plenty to assign for his hope. The sovereignty of God—the sufficiency of Christ—the freeness and extent of the promises—the immutability of Jehovah, who has confirmed his promises with an oath—these, and many other things which are revealed in the sacred volume, may enable the person who relies upon them to go to the very throne of God himself, and to plead for acceptance with him: and, in proportion as he relies upon them, he has within his own bosom a pledge, that he shall never be ashamed.

What an advantage is this to the man that is hoping for eternal happiness! Surely "blessed are the eyes which see the things that we see, and hear the things which we hear."]

3. A rule for his conduct—

[The wise men of antiquity could not so much as devise what constituted the chief good of man; much less could they invent rules which should be universally applicable for the direction of their followers: and the rules which they did prescribe, were in many respects subversive both of individual and public happiness. But the oracles of God are proper to direct us in every particular. We may indeed in some more intricate cases err in the application of them, (else we should be infallible; which is not the lot of man upon earth;) but in all important points the path we are to follow is made as clear to us as the racer's course: yea, the word is not only a general "light to our feet, but a lantern to our steps:" so that what was obscure at a distance, is discovered to us on our nearer approach, and a direction is given us, "This is the way; walk ye in it." The whole circle of moral and religious duty is thus accurately drawn. The poor man who is conversant with his

Bible, needs not to go to the philosopher, and consult with him; nor need he regard the maxims current in the world. With the Scriptures as his guide, and the Holy Spirit as his instructor, he needs no casuist, but an upright heart; no director, but a mind bent upon doing the will of God. If he derive assistance from any, it is from those only who are more fraught with divine knowledge, and whose superior illumination has qualified them to instruct others. But *they* are no farther to be regarded, than as they speak according to the written word.

Compare now the illiterate Christian with the most learned pagan, and see how greatly he is benefited in this respect also by the light of revelation. If indeed he rest in his admission into the Christian covenant, and look no further than to a mere profession of Christianity, he may easily overrate his privileges: but if he consider them *means to an end*, and improve them in that view, he can never be sufficiently thankful, that he was early received into the bosom of the Church, and initiated by baptism into a profession of Christ's religion.]

Having stated our advantages, we proceed to notice,

II. The improvement we should make of them—

If the possession of the sacred oracles constitute our chief advantage, doubtless we should,

1. Study them—

["Search the Scriptures," says our Lord, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life." If we neglect the word of God, we lose the very advantage which God in his mercy has vouchsafed to give us, and reduce ourselves, as much as lieth in us, to the state of heathens. If then we shudder at the thought of reverting to heathenism, let us, not on some occasions only, like the heathen, but on all occasions, consult the oracles, whereby we profess to be directed. "Let our meditation be in them day and night;" and let them be "our delight and our counsellors[b]" — — —]

2. Conform ourselves to them—

[The end of studying the sacred oracles is not to obtain a speculative knowledge, but to have our whole souls cast, as it were, into the mould which is formed therein. By them we must regulate both our principles and our practice. We must not presume to dispute against them, because they are not agreeable to our pre-conceived opinions; we must not complain that this is too humiliating, and that is too strict; but must receive with submission all which the Scriptures reveal,

[b] See Deut. vi. 6—9. and Ps. i. 2. and Prov. ii. 1—6.

believing implicitly whatever they declare, and executing unreservedly whatever they enjoin — — — If we do not thus obey the truth, we shall indeed be in a worse state than the heathens; our baptism will be no baptism; and the unbaptized pagans, who walk according to the light they have, will rise up in judgment against us for abusing the privileges which they perhaps would have improved with joy and gratitude[o].]

3. Promote the knowledge of them in the world—

[If God had imparted to us a secret whereby we could heal all manner of diseases; and our own interest, as well as that of others, would be greatly promoted by disclosing it to the whole world; should we not gladly made it known? Shall we then withhold from the Gentile world the advantages we enjoy; more especially when God has commanded us to communicate as freely as we have received? Should we not contribute, by pecuniary aid, or by our prayers at least, to send the Gospel to the heathen, that they may be partakers with us in all the blessings of salvation?

But there are, alas! heathens, baptized heathens, at home also; and to those we should labour to make known the Gospel of Christ. We should bring them under the sound of the Gospel—we should disperse among them books suited to their states and capacities—we should provide instruction for the rising generation—we should especially teach our own children and servants—and labour, "by turning men from darkness unto light, to turn them also from the power of Satan unto God."]

[o] Rom. ii. 25—27.

MDCCCXXIX.

THE FOLLY OF UNBELIEF.

Rom. iii. 3, 4. *What if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar.*

IN every age of the world man has been prone to disbelieve the testimony of God: our first parents fell by questioning the prohibition which God had given them, and doubting the penalty with which it was enforced. Their posterity, born in their fallen image, have but too faithfully copied their example. By unbelief, the antediluvian world were overwhelmed: by unbelief, God's chosen people the Jews have been

despoiled of all their privileges. The same malignant principle pervades also the Christian church. We profess indeed, like the Jews of old, to venerate the sacred oracles; but there is scarcely a truth contained in them, which is not practically, and almost universally, denied. Yet is this no reason for questioning their divine authority: for God is as immutable in his word, as he is in his nature; and, as his existence would not be affected, though the whole world should be atheists, so neither will one jot or tittle of his word fail, though the world should be infidels. This is the very point on which St. Paul is insisting in the passage before us. Having observed that the Jews were highly privileged in having the oracles of God committed to them, he anticipates the objection which might be urged against him from their unbelief; and allowing the truth of the fact, That they were very generally disbelieved, he denies and refutes the inference that might be drawn from it, by declaring, That their unbelief, however general it might be, could never invalidate the truth of God.

From his words we shall be led to consider,

I. The prevalence of unbelief—

It is not our intention to expose the errors of infidelity, or the sophistry with which the truth of God has been assailed; but rather to point out that secret unbelief which works in the minds of all, even with respect to the most acknowledged truths. That such unbelief prevails, cannot possibly be doubted, if we observe,

1. How general is men's neglect of the word of God—

[The sacred volume lies by us: we have it in our own language, that all may read it; and it is statedly read and explained to us in public. But how few study it! how few regard it! how few are there who do not give a decided, yea, an exclusive preference to books of human science, and even to any worthless novel, or ephemeral compilation! And what is the cause of this? Could they be thus indifferent, if they believed it to be the word of GOD; the word of God to *them?* Would any one manifest such indifference towards a will in

which he was informed that great estates were bequeathed to him? or even towards a map, which would shew him his way through a trackless desert? How much less then would any disregard the Holy Scriptures, if they really believed them to be the charter of their privileges, and the only sure directory to heaven! They would rather account them more precious than gold, and esteem them more than their necessary food[a].]

2. What contempt men discover for the truths they do hear—

[Men hear that there is such a place as heaven, where the saints shall live in everlasting felicity; and such a place as hell, where the wicked shall lie down in everlasting burnings: yet are they neither allured, nor alarmed. When the ministers of God insist on these subjects, they are considered only as preaching "cunningly devised fables." But could this be the case, if men believed the testimony of God? Do men feel no emotion at the news of some unexpected benefit arising to them, or some unforeseen calamity impending over them? Do men treat with contempt a sentence of condemnation, or a notice of reprieve? How then could men so disregard the things revealed in the Gospel, if they believed them to be the very truths of God?]

3. How men expect things in direct opposition to the word of God—

[Unconverted men will as confidently expect to go to heaven, as if the word of God were altogether on their side. The drunkard, the swearer, the sabbath-breaker, the whoremonger, are as persuaded that they shall never come into condemnation, as if there were not one word in all the book of God that declared the contrary. They will never believe that the wrath of God is revealed against such sins as theirs, notwithstanding God so positively declares, that "the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God[b]." They do not indeed imagine that any will be finally lost. They can hear of thousands slain in battle, and yet extend their thoughts no further than the grave. The idea that multitudes of them may possibly have died in their sins, and been consigned over to endless misery, seems so harsh, that they cannot harbour it in their minds one moment, notwithstanding God expressly says, that "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God[c]." Could all this be so, if they believed the word of God? Would not their sentiments then be more conformed to it? Would they not be assured, that, however "it should

[a] Ps. cxix. 72. Job xxiii. 12. [b] 1 Cor. vi. 9.
[c] Ps. ix. 17.

be well with the righteous," it must and should "go ill with the wicked[d]?"]

4. How little men are influenced by the things they profess most to believe—

[They profess to believe that there is a God: yet they do not love him, or fear him, or trust in him, or regard him, any more than if there were no such Being. They profess to believe that they have an immortal soul; yet they pay no more attention to its interests, than if it were not to survive the body. They profess to believe that there will be a day of judgment, wherein they shall give account of themselves to God: yet they are not at all solicitous to know how their account stands; they bestow no pains in preparing for that day; they presume that others are happy, and that *they* shall fare as well as those who have gone before them; and thus they hazard their eternal welfare on a mere groundless surmise. They profess to believe that death will put a period to their day of grace, and that it may snatch them away suddenly, and unawares: yet they live as securely, as if they could call days and years their own: "Soul, take thine ease," is the constant language of their hearts. Now, whence is all this? Will any one say, that these men are thoroughly persuaded even of the things which they profess most to believe? they certainly are not: they give a general assent to them, because they have been educated in these particular sentiments, and because their reason cannot but acquiesce in them as true: but as for the faith which realizes invisible things, which is "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen," they have no portion of it; they are shut up altogether in unbelief.]

The prevalence of unbelief being thus unquestionably proved, we proceed to point out,

II. The folly of it—

A just view of this subject will soon convince us, that the very men who glory in their unbelief, and say, "Wisdom shall die with us[e]," are indeed influenced by the most foolish and fatal of all principles: for, with respect to unbelief,

1. It cannot avert the evils which it affects to despise—

[Unbelief can never make void the truth of God. It did not in the days of old. When Satan said to our first parents, "Ye shall not surely die," and they credited his testimony in

[d] Isai. iii. 10, 11. [e] Job xii. 2.

preference to God's, did their unbelief avail them? was the threatening less certain? Did God forbear to inflict it? Did not their souls die that very day, being instantly separated from God, which constitutes spiritual death, and becoming obnoxious to his wrath, the chief ingredient of eternal death? Did not their bodies also, though, for the peopling of the earth, and for other gracious purposes, they were suffered to continue awhile, become impregnated with the seeds of death, whereby they were in due time reduced again to their native dust?

When the unbelieving Jews rejected their Messiah, were the purposes of God at all frustrated? Yea, were they not rather furthered and accomplished by their unbelief? and were not the whole nation, except a little remnant, broken off from their stock, and the Gentiles, whom they regarded as accursed, engrafted on it?

So we may *now* ask of unbelieving sinners, "What if ye do not believe? shall your unbelief make the faith of God without effect?" Will God cease to be an holy, sin-hating, sin-avenging God, because ye presume to think him even such an one as yourselves? Shall sin no longer be debasing, defiling, damning, because ye choose to esteem it light and venial? Shall death wait your pleasure, because ye think ye have made a covenant with it, and put it far from you? shall the judgment-day lose its solemnity, and the account you are to give be made less strict, because you take it for granted, that all shall then be well with you? Shall hell be divested of its horrors, because you will not believe that there is any such place, or because you are averse to hear of it? Shall the nature and blessedness of heaven be altogether changed, in order that it may, according to your conceits, be the residence of the wicked as well as of the righteous? In short, is it reasonable, is it probable, is it possible, that the truth of God should be made void, merely because you do not choose to believe it?]

2. It enhances and insures the evils, whose very existence it presumes to deny—

[The Apostle tells us what should be the fixed principle of our minds, "Let God be true; but every man a liar." But unbelief reverses this; and gives, not only to the testimony of man, but even to his most groundless conjectures, a greater weight than to the most solemn declarations of Jehovah. What an affront is this to the Majesty of heaven! Is there a man on earth that would not take offence at such an indignity, especially if it were offered to him by those whom he had never deceived, and for whose sake alone he had spoken? Let it not then be thought, that, to treat God as though he had no

veracity, is a light matter; for surely it must greatly provoke the eyes of his glory.

Besides, unbelief, while it thus incenses God against us, rejects the only possible means of reconciliation with him; and consequently rivets all our guilt upon us———Judge then whether they, who yield themselves up to its influence, be not "blinded by Satan," and victims to their own delusions[f]?]

By way of IMPROVEMENT, let me commend to your attention the grand object of a Christian's faith—

[It is to little purpose to have *general* notions of the prevalence and folly of unbelief, if we do not apply them *particularly* to that fundamental doctrine of Scripture, That we are to be justified solely by faith in the Lord Jesus. This is that, which is emphatically called, The Gospel; concerning the *necessity* of believing which, nothing more need be urged, than that assertion of our Lord, "*He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned*[g]." The point for us now to determine, is, Do we *indeed* believe in Christ for the justification of our souls? We are continually apt to mistake the nature of saving faith; and, for want of right views of that, we put away from ourselves all that is spoken respecting unbelief, as though we had no experience of it, no concern about it. But it has been already abundantly shewn, that if we believe only in the manner that the generality of Christians do, we have no *true* faith at all. Examine then, Have you clear and lively views of Christ as the Saviour of sinners? Are you deeply convinced of your own sinfulness, and your consequent need of mercy? Have you renounced every other hope? and do you rely simply and solely on Christ's atonement? Finally, are you deriving virtue from him for the healing of your corruptions, and for the bringing forth of all the fruits of righteousness to his praise and glory? *This*, and *this alone*, is saving faith; and he, who *thus* believes, shall be saved; and he, who does not *thus* believe, shall be damned. Let not any object, and say, "What is there in this faith that should save us, or in the want of it that should condemn us?" Our only inquiry must be, Has God suspended our salvation on the exercise of a living faith, or not? If he has, we have no more to say, than, "Let God be true: but every man a liar." To dispute against him is to dispute against the wind. The wind will not stop its course for us: yet sooner should that be done, yea, "sooner should heaven and earth pass away, than one jot or tittle of his word should fail." If then no objections of our's can ever disprove the truth of God's word, or prevent the execution of it on our own souls, let us guard

[f] 2 Cor. iv. 4. Isai. lxvi. 4. [g] Mark xvi. 16.

against that principle of unbelief, which operates so powerfully, so fatally, within us. Let us remember where our danger lies: it is not in giving too much weight to the declarations of God: but in softening them down, and accommodating them to our vain wishes or carnal apprehensions. Let then the fore-mentioned record abide upon our minds. Let us be persuaded that he, whom God blesses, shall be blessed; and he, whom God curses, shall be cursed. In other words, Let us rest assured, that life is to be found in Christ alone; and that "he who hath the Son, hath life; and he who hath not the Son of God, hath not life[h]."]

[h] 1 John v. 11, 12.

MDCCCXXX.

THE EXTENT OF MAN'S DEPRAVITY.

Rom. iii. 10—20. *It is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.*

THE Scriptures are the only and infallible source of divine knowledge. To them the Apostles continually refer in support of their doctrines. No subject is capable of more ample proof from them than that before us. St. Paul is shewing that all mankind are guilty and depraved. In confirmation of this he cites many passages from the Old Testament[a]. From these, as stated and improved in the text, we are led to consider,

I. The representation which the Scripture gives of our state—

[a] See Ps. xiv. 1—3. Prov. i. 16, 18. Isai. lix. 7, 8.

The testimonies here adduced, declare, that the most lamentable depravity pervades,

1. All ranks and orders of men—

"There is none righteous, no, not one[b]"—

[Righteousness is a conformity of heart and life to the law of God. Where is the man on earth that possesses it by nature? Where is the man whose deviations from this standard have not been innumerable?]

"There is none that understandeth"—

[The natural man has no discernment of spiritual things[c]: his practical judgment is in favour of sin and the world.]

"There is none that seeketh after God"—

[The things of time and sense are diligently pursued; but who ever cultivates divine knowledge, or seriously inquires after God[d]?]

"All are gone out of the way"—

[Men universally prefer the way of self-righteousness to that of faith in Christ, and that of sin and self-indulgence to holiness and self-denial. No one that sees them would imagine that they really intended to tread in the steps of Christ and his Apostles.]

"They are together become unprofitable"—

[God has formed us for his own glory, and each other's good: but unregenerate men never attempt to answer these ends of their creation[e]: hence they are justly compared to things worthless and vile[f].]

"There is none that doeth good, no, not one"—

[Nothing is really good, which is not so in its principle, rule, and end[g]. But where is the action of any natural man that will stand this test?]

2. All the faculties and powers of men—

[b] The Apostle has so arranged his quotations as to form a beautiful climax, every subsequent passage affirming more than that which precedes it.

[c] 1 Cor. ii. 14.

[d] Job xxxv. 10.

[e] They may do good to the bodies of men; but never shew any real solicitude about their souls. Indeed, how should they, when they care not for their own souls?

[f] Luke xiv. 34, 35. and John xv. 6.

[g] The fear and love of God are the *principle*, the Scriptures th *rule*, and God's glory the *end* of Christian obedience, 1 Cor. x. 31.

[Nothing is more offensive than an open sepulchre[h]; or more venomous than an asp; yet both the one and the other fitly represent the effusions of a carnal heart: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak:" deceit, calumny, invective, yea, in many instances, the most horrible oaths and execrations will proceed from it[i]. Hence that awful description of the human tongue[k]— From *words* we are ready also to proceed to *actions*, yea, even the most cruel and atrocious. Who that sees with what readiness nations engage in war, will question the declaration in the text? Hazael revolted at the idea of murder, when warned of his readiness to commit it; yet notwithstanding his present feelings, how "*swift* were his feet to shed blood[l]!" How many at this day are impelled by shame even to destroy their own offspring! How frequently do men engage in duels on account of the slightest injury or insult! And in how many instances might we ourselves, when irritated and inflamed, have committed murder in an unguarded moment, exactly as others have done, who in a cooler hour would have shuddered at the thought! The instance of David, who, though "a man after God's own heart," murdered Uriah, and many others with him, to conceal his shame, is sufficient of itself to shew us what the best of men might commit, if left to themselves[m]. Well we may apply to this subject that humiliating language of the prophet[n]— Thus, God himself being witness, instead of walking in "paths of peace" and safety, we all by nature prefer the "ways which bring destruction and misery" both on ourselves and all around us[o]. The whole of our state is properly summed up in *this*, that "there is no fear of God before our eyes;" so entirely are our understandings blinded, and our hearts alienated from him, by means of our innate depravity[p].]

This humiliating view of our state should lead us to consider,

II. The INFERENCES to be deduced from it—

Those which the Apostle suggests in the text will suffice for our attention at this time:

[h] Matt. xxiii. 27.

[i] No less than four expressions, and those exceeding strong, are sued to declare the evils of the tongue.

[k] Jam. iii. 6.

[l] 2 Kings viii. 12, 13. with ib. ver. 15. and xiii. 7.

[m] 2 Sam. xi. 14—17. [n] Isai. i. 5, 6. [o] Ps. xxxvi. 1.

[p] ver. 16. and 17. relate primarily to the evil which men do to *others*, though they may include what they do to themselves. See Isai. lix. 7, 8.

1. We are all "guilty before God"—

[It seems inconceivable to many, that they should really be obnoxious to everlasting misery in hell: and they will plead their own cause with zeal and eloquence: if they concede it with respect to some more heinous transgressors, they will deny it in reference to themselves. But God has taken care that "*every* mouth should be stopped." It is not possible to express the universality of men's wickedness more strongly than it is expressed in the words before us[q]. All then must "become guilty before God," and acknowledge their desert of his wrath and indignation; they must feel their desert of condemnation, as much as a man that has been condemned for parricide feels the justice of the sentence which is pronounced against him. O that we might all be brought to such unfeigned contrition! We should then be "not far from the kingdom of God[r]."]

2. We can never be justified by any works of our own—

["We *know* that what the law saith, it saith unto them that are under the law." Now the law saith, "Do this and live: transgress it and thou shalt die[s];" but it speaks not one word about mitigating its demands to the weak, however weak, or its penalties to the guilty, however small the measure of their guilt. How then can any man "be justified by the works of the law?" Can a man be guilty, and not guilty? or can he be condemned by the law, and yet justified by it at the same time, and in the same respects? Let all hope then, and all thought, of justification by the law be put away from for us ever. God has provided a better way for our justification, namely, through the blood and righteousness of his dear Son[t]: and to lead us into that way was the intention of the Apostle in citing the passages that have already been considered. Let us improve his humiliating representation for this salutary end; so shall we be "justified freely by grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus[u]."]

[q] "None, no, not one;" "none; none; none, no, not one;" "all; all together;" "every mouth;" even "all the world." Can any, after this, fancy himself an exception?

[r] Ps. li. 17.

[s] Rom. x. 5. Gal. iii. 10.

[t] Rom. iii. 21, 22.

[u] Rom. iii. 24.

MDCCCXXXI.

OUR VIOLATIONS OF EVERY COMMANDMENT.

Rom. iii. 20. *By the law is the knowledge of sin.*

OUR lost estate, and our consequent need of a Saviour, can never be truly known, unless we compare our lives with that universal rule of duty, the law of God. St. Paul took this method of proving that both Jews and Gentiles were under sin: in all the preceding part of this epistle he sets forth their transgressions against the law; and having confirmed his assertions by many passages out of the old Testament, he says in the verse before my text, "We know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God." From hence it is evident that the law of which he is speaking, is the moral law, that same law which was originally engraven in the heart of Adam, and was afterwards published to the world on Mount Sinai: for the Gentiles having never been subject to the ceremonial or judicial law, it can be no other than the moral law, which shuts *their* mouth and brings *them* in guilty before God. The principal ends for which he referred them to this law were these; first, to convince them that they could not be justified by their obedience to it (and therefore in the words immediately preceding our text, he says, that by the law shall no flesh be justified;) and secondly, to shew them their undone condition by the law; and therefore he adds, in the words of our text, "by the law is the knowledge of sin."

From these words we shall take occasion to compare our lives with the law of God, that so we may obtain the knowledge of our sins: and while we are thus bringing our iniquities to remembrance, may the Spirit of God come down upon us, to convince us all of sin, and to reveal unto us that only Deliverer from sin, the Lord Jesus Christ!

The law was delivered to Moses upon two tables of stone, and comprised in ten commandments.

The first of the commandments respects the *object* of our worship, "Thou shalt have none other gods but me." In this we are required to believe in God, to love him, and to serve him with all our hearts, and minds, and souls, and strength: and if we examine ourselves by it, we shall see that our transgressions are neither few nor small: for instead of believing in him at all times, how rarely have we either trembled at his threatenings or confided in his promises! Instead of loving him supremely, have we not set our affections on the things of time and sense? Instead of fearing him above all, have we not been swayed rather by the fear of man, or a regard to our worldly interests? Instead of relying on him in all difficulties, have we not rather "leaned to our own understanding, and trusted in an arm of flesh?" and instead of making it our meat and drink to do *his* will, have we not lived to ourselves, seeking our own pleasure, and following our own ways? Surely if we seriously inquire into our past conduct, we shall find that throughout our whole lives "other lords have had dominion over us," the world has been our idol, and self has usurped the throne of God. If therefore we were to be tried by this commandment only, our offences would appear exceeding numerous, more than the hairs of our head, more than the sands upon the sea shore.

The second commandment respects the *nature* of worship: "Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image." God is a Spirit, and therefore is not to be addressed by the medium of any sensible object, but is to be "worshipped in spirit and in truth." Yet, whenever we have presented ourselves before him, we have scarcely paid him more respect, yea frequently much less, than the heathens manifest towards their gods of wood and stone. Let us only consider what has been the frame of our minds when we have approached the throne of grace; how little have we stood in awe of his Majesty! How unaffecting has been our sense either of our wants, or of his power

and readiness to help us! And if we look at the prayers which we have offered, we shall see cause to acknowledge that they have been dull, formal, and hypocritical. Our confessions have neither been attended with humility nor followed by amendment: our petitions have been without faith and without fervour: and our thanksgivings, which should have been the warm effusions of a grateful heart, have frozen on our very lips. Indeed secret prayer is by the generality either wholly omitted, or performed as a task or drudgery: as for family devotions they are wholly, and almost universally, neglected: and in the public assemblies, instead of breathing out our hearts before God, our thoughts are wandering to the ends of the earth, or, as the Scripture has said, "we draw nigh unto God with our mouth, but our heart is far from him." Let us all therefore consult the records of our own consciences, that we may judge ourselves with respect to these things; nor let us forget that every such omission and every such defect has swelled the number of our transgressions, and greatly aggravated our guilt and misery.

The third commandment respects the *manner* of worship; "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." The name of God is never to be uttered by us but with awe and reverence. But, not to mention the stupid indifference with which it is often repeated in prayer, how *generally*, how *daringly* is it profaned in common conversation, so *generally*, that no age, sex, or quality is exempt from this impious custom; and so *daringly*, that it is even vindicated: the thoughtless manner in which that sacred name is used, is often urged as an excuse for the profanation of it; when it is that very thoughtlessness which constitutes the profanation. But instead of extenuating the guilt of this sin, we shall do well to consider what God has said respecting it, "The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."

The fourth commandment respects the *time* of worship; "Remember the sabbath-day to keep it

holy." In what manner we are to keep it holy, the Prophet Isaiah teaches us[a]; "Turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing *thy* pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and honour HIM, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words." But how has this day been regarded by us? Have we conscientiously devoted it to God, and spent those sacred hours in reading, meditation and prayer? Have we, as well by example as by precept, inculcated on our dependants a regard for the sabbath? and have we improved it for the welfare of their souls as well as of our own? alas! have not those blessed seasons been rather wasted in worldly business, worldly company, and worldly pleasures? Yes, it is to be feared that however we may have kept up a mere formal attendance on the external services of the Church, we have not any of us accounted our sabbaths a delight, or spent them in devout and holy exercises. We may rest assured however, that of every such abuse of the sabbath we shall give a strict account; for if God has so solemnly warned us to "*remember* that we keep the sabbath holy," no doubt he himself will remember what regard we payed to it.

Here end the commandments of the first table, which relate to God, as those of the second table relate more especially to our neighbour; yet not so entirely as to exclude ourselves. We proceed therefore with them:—

The fifth commandment, "Honour thy father and thy mother," requires a becoming deportment not only towards our own immediate parents, but towards all mankind, however related to us; our superiors, equals, and inferiors: to the first of these we owe submission; to the two last, love and condescension. But how often have we affected independence, and refused submission to lawful authority! How often have we envied the advancement of our equals, or exalted ourselves above them! How often have we

[a] Isai. lviii. 13

treated our inferiors with haughtiness and severity Even our natural parents we have by no means honoured as we ought, nor sustained any relation in life as God has required us to do. In all these respects therefore we have sinned before God, and "treasured up wrath for ourselves against the day of wrath."

Thus far many will readily acknowledge themselves guilty. But so ignorant are mankind in general of the spirituality and extent of God's law, that they account themselves blameless with respect to all the other commandments: if they have not literally, and in the grossest sense, committed murder, adultery, theft, or perjury, they have no conception how they can have transgressed the laws which forbid these things. But let us calmly and dispassionately examine this matter; bearing this in mind, that *it is our interest to know our sins;* because by knowing them, we shall be stirred up to seek the forgiveness of them through the Saviour's blood; whereas, if we remain ignorant of our sins, we shall not feel our need of a Saviour, and shall consequently die without an interest in him.

The sixth commandment then respects our own and our neighbour's *life;* "Thou shalt do no murder." We take for granted that none of us have imbrued our hands in human blood: yet this by no means exempts us from the charge of murder. Our Lord, in that justly admired Sermon on the Mount, has given us the clew, whereby we may be led to a true exposition of this and of all the other commandments; "Ye have heard," says he, "that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment; but I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment, and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." By this comment of our Lord's, we are assured that causeless anger and passion are esteemed

by him as violations of this commandment. And St. John in the third chapter of his first epistle confirms this by saying, "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death; whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." From this additional testimony therefore we see that the hating of any person, or the not truly loving him, is a species of murder in the sight of God. Who then is innocent? Who has been free from passion? Who has not often conceived anger and hatred against his neighbour? And shall it be thought unreasonable to call this murder? Look at the effects of anger; how often has it terminated in murder, when the perpetrators of the act little supposed themselves capable of such an atrocious crime! and if we have been irritated and provoked by small occasions, who can tell what our anger might have effected if the occasion had been increased, and the preventing grace of God withdrawn? And what is that which the world has falsely called a sense of honour? 'tis revenge, 'tis murder; murder in the heart, as it often proves murder in the act. But there are other ways of committing murder: if we have wished a rival dead, in order that we might be advanced; if we have wished an enemy dead, because of our aversion to him; if we have wished a relation or any other person dead, in order that we might succeed to his fortune or preferment, or if we have rejoiced in the death of another on any of these accounts, we have manifested that same principle in our hearts, which, if kindled by temptation and favoured by opportunity, would have produced the most fatal effects. Nor is this all: we are no less guilty in the sight of God, if we do what tends to the destruction of our own life, than if we seek the destruction of our neighbour's life. Not to mention therefore the too common act of suicide, how many bring upon themselves pain, sickness, and disease, I may add too, an early and premature death, by means of debauchery and excess. Let not any one therefore imagine himself innocent even in respect of murder:

for in every instance of anger, impatience, or intemperance, yea, whenever we have wished for, or rejoiced in another's dissolution, we have violated this commandment.

The seventh commandment respects our own and our neighbour's *chastity:* "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Fornication and adultery are by many practised without remorse, and recorded without shame. But to such we may well address the words of Solomon: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." Nor will it avail any thing to say, that we committed these sins only in our youth; and that now we have left them off; for sin is sin, whensoever and by whomsoever committed; and however it may have escaped our memory, it is not therefore erased from the book of God's remembrance; nor however partial the world may be in its judgment respecting it, will it escape due notice at another tribunal; for we are assured by the Apostle, that "whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."

But this commandment extends much further than to the outward act: it reaches to the inmost thoughts and desires of the heart. Let us hear an infallible expositor; let us hear what our Lord himself says in his Sermon on the Mount: "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." By this commandment therefore is forbidden all indulgence of unclean thoughts, and consequently all immodest words, all obscene allusions, all wanton looks, all impure desires and affections. Who then will say, I am pure? Who will take up a stone to cast at another?

The eighth commandment respects our neighbour's *goods;* "Thou shalt not steal." Theft is universally

branded with disgrace: and it may be hoped that we, who have been so far out of the reach of want, have never been reduced to so infamous a practice. Yet how many are guilty of practices equally repugnant to the spirit of this commandment! How many defraud the government by withholding or evading the legal imposts! How many defraud the public by circulating coin which they know to be either base or defective! How many defraud those with whom they transact business, by taking undue advantage of their ease, their ignorance, or their necessities! How many defraud their creditors by neglecting to pay their debts! And how many defraud the poor by not giving to them what the Great Proprietor of all hath made their due! If indeed we regard only these *effects* of dishonesty, they will probably appear to us light and insignificant; but if we look to *the principle* which gives birth to these things, it will be found no less corrupt than that which manifests itself in theft and robbery. Odious therefore as the imputation of fraud may justly be considered, there is not one who has not at some time or other been guilty of it: so that this commandment as well as all that have preceded it, will accuse us before God.

The ninth commandment respects our neighbour's *reputation;* "Thou shalt not bear false witness." We offend against this law, not only when we perjure ourselves before a magistrate, but whenever we misrepresent the conduct of others, or pass hasty and ungrounded censures upon them. All whisperers therefore and backbiters, and all who circulate reports injurious to their neighbour, are condemned by it: nor does it forbid such falsehoods only as are pernicious, but such also as are jocular, marvellous, or exculpative: for, as to the morality of the act, it matters little whether we falsify *to* our neighbour, or *against* him. Who then has not been often guilty in these respects? Who does not feel the force of the Psalmist's observation, that "as soon as we are born we go astray, speaking lies?" Nor let any think lightly of this sin: for so detestable is it in the

sight of God, that he has given us this solemn warning, "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

The tenth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet," is perhaps the most extensive of any; because while the others forbid the indulgence of any sinful *act*, this forbids the first risings of *desire* after any sinful object: it utterly condemns the least motions of discontent at our own lot, or of envy at the lot of others. It was this commandment which first wounded the conscience of the Apostle Paul; he was in all points relating to the ceremonial law, and according to the letter of the moral law, blameless; and he conceived that he must therefore of necessity be in a state of salvation: but this good opinion of his state arose from his ignorance of the spirituality and extent of the law: and when his eyes were once opened to see that the law condemned him for the first risings of evil as well as for the actual commission of it, he became guilty in his own sight, and acknowledged the justice of his condemnation. Thus he says of himself; "I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust (i. e. the evil and danger of it) unless the law had said, Thou shalt not covet: for I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died." The plain meaning of which is this: before he understood the spirituality of the law he thought himself safe; but when that was revealed to him, he saw himself justly condemned for his offences against it. May that same, that salutary, conviction be wrought also in our hearts! for our Lord has told us, that "the whole need not a physician, but they that are sick;" plainly intimating thereby, that we must feel our need of him, before we shall be willing to receive his saving benefits. Though therefore we may think as highly of our state as the Apostle did of his, yet if we feel not our condemnation by the law, we shall but deceive ourselves; and though we be possessed of his knowledge, zeal, and holiness, yet shall we, like him,

be "dead in trespasses and sins:" for till we be indeed weary and heavy laden with a sense of sin, we never shall, nor ever can, come unto Christ for rest.

To CONCLUDE—

If, while we have been surveying the duties of the first table, we have called to mind our low esteem for God, together with the unnumbered instances wherein we have neglected his worship, misemployed his sabbaths, and profaned his name; if in examining the duties of the second table, we have remembered our several violations of them, both *generally*, by misconduct in the different relations of life, and *particularly*, by anger and intemperance, by actual or mental impurity, by dishonesty or want of liberality, by wilful and allowed falsehood, by discontent with our own lot, or coveting of another's, surely we shall confess with the Psalmist, that "our iniquities are grown up unto heaven, they are a sore burthen too heavy for us to bear." We shall see also with how great propriety the compilers of our Liturgy have directed us to cry after every commandment, "Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law."

To make us thus cry out for mercy is the proper use of the law; for the Apostle says, "The law is our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ." And if we once obtain this view of the law, and by it the knowledge of our sins, we shall then have the best preservative against errors: for instead of making the divinity of Christ and his atonement a matter of mere speculative inquiry, we shall see that we have no safety but in his blood, no acceptance but in his righteousness. We shall then "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ," and shall each of us be like-minded with that great Apostle who said, "I desire to be found *in Christ*, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

MDCCCXXXII.

THE BELIEVER'S RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Rom. iii. 21, 22. *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.*

IT is justly observed by our Lord, that "they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Persons never value a remedy till they are aware of their disease: they must know their condemnation and misery by the Law, before they will receive with gratitude the glad tidings of the Gospel. On this account St. Paul labours through the whole preceding part of this epistle, and especially in the ten verses before the text, to prove all, both Jews and Gentiles, guilty before God; and to shew that they need a better righteousness than any which they themselves can work out. Then he introduces that righteousness which is exhibited in the Gospel, and is offered to every repenting and believing sinner.

To elucidate the subject before us, we propose to shew,

I. What is that righteousness whereby we are to be saved—

The Apostle's description of it is as clear and comprehensive as we can possibly desire:

1. It is "the righteousness of God"—

[*Twice* is it called "the righteousness of God;" by which expression we are to understand that it is a righteousness *provided by God for sinful man, wrought out by God himself in the midst of us*, and *accepted of God on our behalf.*

When we were destitute of any righteousness of our own, and incapable of establishing one that should be sufficient for us, God, in his infinite mercy determined *to provide one for us*, that should be commensurate with the demands of law and justice, and fully adequate to our wants. For this end he sent his co-equal, co-eternal Son to fulfil the precepts of the law which we had broken, and to endure its penalties which we had incurred. The Lord Jesus came into the world and *executed his high commission;* and thus, as the Prophet Daniel expresses

it, "brought in an everlasting righteousness[a]." He being "Emmanuel, God with us," his righteousness is truly and properly the righteousness of God. This righteousness *God accepts for us* as though it were our own. In consideration of what Jesus suffered, he remits our punishment; and in consideration of Christ's meritorious obedience, he bestows on us the reward of eternal life. Hence, from beginning to end, this is distinguished from the righteousness of *man;* seeing that it was provided by God the Father, wrought out by God the Son, and shall be accepted both by the Father and the Son on our behalf.]

2. It is a righteousness "without the law"—

[By this expression the Apostle distinguishes it from any righteousness arising from our obedience to the law; and intimates, that it is totally independent of any works of ours, past, present, or future. No works of ours can add to it in the smallest degree, or render it either more satisfactory to God, or more sufficient for us. On the contrary, if we were to attempt to unite any thing of our own with it, instead of rendering it more firm, we should utterly make it void; and instead of securing to ourselves an interest in it, we should cut off ourselves from all hope of acceptance by it[b]. We must not be understood to say, that this righteousness supersedes *the practice* of good works, (for it lays us under tenfold obligation to perform them[c]) but that it excludes all *reliance on* our own works, and will on no account admit a creature's righteousness to participate the honour of justifying us before God.]

3. It is a righteousness "by faith of Jesus Christ"—

[As in the foregoing expressions this righteousness is declared to be God's, exclusive of any works of man, so here we are told how it becomes ours. But this part of the subject will be more fully considered under the third head of our discourse; I will therefore only observe at present, that we must obtain an interest in this righteousness, not by working, but by believing in Christ. We must no more attempt to *purchase it* by our works, than to *add to it* by our works; or, if we will purchase it, we must "buy it *without money and without price*[d]."]

To confirm the Apostle's description, we shall proceed to shew,

II. What evidence we have that this is the only justifying righteousness—

[a] Dan. ix. 24.
[b] Gal. v. 2, 4.
[c] Tit. ii. 11, 12.
[d] Isai. lv. 1.

There will be no room left to doubt respecting it, if we consider, that,

1. It was "manifested" to be so by the Gospel—

[This truth had been obscurely intimated under the law; but "*now*" it was fully "manifested" by the Gospel. When Christ was just entering on his ministry, John Baptist pointed him out as "the Lamb of God that should take away the sins of the world[e]." Christ himself declared that he was about to "give his life a ransom for many[f]," and that they were to receive the remission of sins as purchased by his blood[g]. St. Peter in his very first sermon exhorted the people to believe in Christ for the remission of their sins, and declared to them that there was no other name whereby they could be saved[h]. St. Paul in numberless places insists upon our seeking justification solely by faith in Christ, without the smallest mixture of dependence on our own works[i]: and when St. Peter, through fear of the Jews, had given some reason to think that an obedience to the Mosaic ritual ought to be, or at least *might* be, added to the righteousness of Christ in order to render it more effectual, St. Paul reproved him publicly before all the Church, and reminded him that all, not excepting the Apostles themselves, must be justified solely by the righteousness of Christ, without any works of the law[k]. Is not this a strong confirmation of the point before us?]

2. It was "witnessed by the law and the prophets"—

[The moral law may in some sense be considered as bearing testimony to the righteousness of Christ: for though it makes no express mention of it, yet, by condemning all without exception, it "shuts men up to the faith of Christ," and serves as "a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ[l]." The ceremonial law in all its ordinances pointed directly to Christ. It is not possible to contemplate the Paschal lamb, or the scape-goat, or indeed any of the sacrifices or ablutions, without seeing Christ prefigured by them, and confessing *him* to be "the end of the law for righteousness" to believing sinners[m].

If we consult the prophets, they are unanimous in directing us to Christ. The prophecies that preceded Moses, represent Christ as the one conqueror of the serpent[n], and the one source of blessedness to man[o]. Moses himself spake of *him* as the prophet, to whom all must look for instruction and

[e] John i. 29. [f] Matt. xx. 28. [g] Matt. xxvi. 28.
[h] Acts ii. 38. and iv. 11, 12.
[i] Rom. iv. 3—5, 14. and v. 9, 15—18. [k] Gal. ii. 14—16.
[l] Gal. iii. 22—24. [m] Rom. x. 4. [n] Gen. iii. 15.
[o] Gen. xii. 3. and xv. 6.

salvation[p]. Jeremiah calls him by name, "The Lord our righteousness[q]:" and Isaiah represents every child of God as saying with exultation, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength[r]." To adduce more proofs is unnecessary, since we are assured by St. Peter, that *all* the prophets unite their testimonies to the same effect[s]. What stronger evidence than this can any man desire?]

But we have further to inquire,

III. How this righteousness becomes ours—

Faith is the means whereby alone we obtain an interest in it—

[This also is *twice* intimated in the text: nor can it be too often repeated, or too strongly insisted on. We must come to Christ as perishing sinners; and, without attempting to establish, in whole or in part, our own righteousness, we must submit to be saved by his alone[t]. We must be contented to have *his* "righteousness imputed to us without works[u]," and to make his obedience the one ground of our hope[x]. They alone who *thus* regard Christ, can properly be said to believe in him; and it is only when we *thus* believe, that "he is made of God righteousness unto us[y]."]

On our believing, it is instantly put to our account—

[This righteousness is bestowed upon us freely by God himself; it is not only given "unto" us as a portion, but is put "upon" us as a garment. In this light it is spoken of by our Lord himself, who counsels us to "buy it of him that we may be clothed, and that the shame of our nakedness may not appear[z]." Without this, we are despoiled of our innocence, and exposed to shame, as our first parents were upon the introduction of sin: but as they were covered by the skins of their sacrifices according to the direction which God himself had given them[a], so are we by "putting on the Lord Jesus[b]:" nor, when clothed with his righteousness, can even God himself behold a spot or blemish in us[c]. Hence the Church rejoices with joy unspeakable[d], and is rendered meet for the presence of her heavenly bridegroom[e].]

APPLICATION—

[p] Acts iii. 22, 23.
[q] Jer. xxiii. 6.
[r] Isai. xlv. 24, 25.
[s] Acts iii. 24. and x. 43.
[t] Rom. x. 3.
[u] Rom. iv. 6.
[x] Rom. v. 19.
[y] 1 Cor. i. 30.
[z] Rev. iii. 18.
[a] Gen. iii. 7, 21.
[b] Rom. xiii. 14.
[c] Eph. v. 27.
[d] Isai. lxi. 10.
[e] Rev. xix. 8.

Must not the *self-righteous moralist* then stand confounded before God?

[Surely it is no light matter to pour contempt on the righteousness of *God*, as though it were insufficient for us without "the filthy rags of our righteousness[f]." It is no light matter to reject the united testimony of the law and the prophets, of Christ and his Apostles. And as the guilt of such conduct is great, so is also the danger: and whosoever persists in it must irremediably perish[g].]

On the other hand, should not the *self-condemning sinner* receive encouragement from this subject?

[It is well to condemn ourselves, but not to despond. *Twice* is it declared in the text, that this righteousness is for "*all*" who will believe in Christ[h]. And is it not sufficient for *all*? Let all then "set to their seal that God is true." Let them honour the righteousness of Christ by their affiance in it; and it shall be "manifested" to their consciences, no less than in the Scriptures themselves, that it is complete in itself, adequate to our necessities, and effectual for all who rely upon it.]

[f] Isai. lxiv. 6. [g] Rom. ix. 30—32.
[h] Compare Acts xiii. 38, 39. with Isai. i. 18. and Rom. v. 20, 21.

MDCCCXXXIII.

THE JUSTICE OF GOD IN JUSTIFYING SINNERS.

Rom. iii. 24—26. *Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*

THE whole plan of the Gospel takes for granted that we are in a lost and helpless condition. Its provisions are suited to such, and to such only. Hence the Apostle proves at large that "we all have sinned and come short of the glory of God;" and then he states, in the plainest and strongest manner, the method which God has proposed for our restoration to his favour.

The words of the text will lead us to shew,

I. The way of a sinner's justification before God—

The *manner* of our justification is here plainly declared—

[There seems indeed a senseless tautology in the expressions of the text; but the words "freely," and "by grace," are of very different import, and are necessary to convey the full meaning of the Apostle.

We are justified "freely," that is, *without any cause* for it *in ourselves*[a]: no works *before* our justification, no repentance or reformation *at the time* of our justification, no evangelical obedience *after* our justification, are at all taken into the account. There is no merit whatever in any thing we ever have done, or in any thing we ever can do. Our justification is as independent of any merit in us, as was the gift of that Saviour through whom we are justified.

Our justification also springs from *no motive in God*, except his own boundless "grace" and mercy. When speaking merely after the manner of men, we say, that God consults his own glory: but, strictly speaking, if the whole human race were punished after the example of the fallen angels, he would be as happy and as glorious as he is at present: just as the sun in the firmament would shine equally bright, if this globe that is illuminated by it were annihilated. We can neither add to, nor detract from, God's happiness or glory in the smallest possible degree. His mercy to us therefore is mere grace, for grace sake.]

Yet it is of great importance to notice also *the means* by which we are justified—

[Though our justification is a free gift as it respects us, yet it was dearly purchased by our blessed Lord, who "laid down his own life a ransom for us." There was a necessity on the part of God, as the moral Governor of the world, that his justice should be satisfied for our violations of his law. This was done through the atoning blood of Jesus; on which account we are said to be "justified by his blood," and to be "redeemed to God by his blood." The Father's grace is the source from whence our justification flows; and "the redemption that is in Christ" is the means, by which God is enabled to bestow it consistently with his own honour.

In this view the text informs us, that "God hath set forth his Son to be a propitiation, or mercy-seat[b], through faith in his blood." The mercy-seat was the place where God visibly

[a] δωρεάν. See John xv. 25. in the Greek. And for the truth of the assertion, see Tit. iii. 5.

[b] ἱλαστήριον. See Heb. ix. 5. the Greek.

resided, and from whence he dispensed mercy to the people, as soon as ever the blood of the sacrifices was sprinkled before him[c]." But that typical mercy-seat is accessible no more: Christ is now the true mercy-seat, where God resides, and from whence he dispenses all his favours of grace and peace. God requires, however, that we should come with the blood of our Great Sacrifice, and sprinkle it, as it were, before him, in token of our affiance in it, and as an acknowledgment, that we hope for mercy *only* through the blood of atonement.]

But in our contemplation of this subject, we are more particularly called upon to shew,

II. The *justice* of God as displayed in it—

God had exercised "forbearance" and forgiveness towards sinners for the space of four thousand years; and was now, in the Apostle's days, dispensing pardon to thousands and to myriads. That, in so doing, God acted consistently with his own justice, the Apostle here *labours* to establish: he repeats it no less than *thrice* in the short space of our text. We shall therefore shew distinctly, how the justice of God is displayed,

1. In the appointment of *Christ* to be our propitiation—

[If God had forgiven sins without any atonement, his justice, to say the least, would have lain concealed; perhaps we may say, would have been greatly dishonoured. But when, in order to satisfy the demands of justice, God sends, not an angel or archangel, but his only dear Son, and lays on *him* our iniquities, and exacts of *him* the utmost farthing of our debt, then indeed the justice of God is "declared," yea, is exhibited in the most awful colours. The condemnation of the fallen angels was indeed a terrible display of this attribute: yet was it no proof of justice in comparison of that more conspicuous demonstration which was given of it in the death of God's co-equal, co-eternal Son.]

2. In requiring us to *believe in him* as our propitiation—

[God wills that every one should come to "Christ" as a propitiation *through faith in his blood*, or, in other words, should express his dependence on that blood that satisfied divine justice. As the offender under the law, when he put his hand upon the head of his sacrifice, confessed his own desert

[c] 2 Cor. v. 19.

of death; and as the high-priest, when he sprinkled the blood of the sacrifices before the mercy-seat, confessed that the hope of all Israel was derived from that blood[d]; so when we look to Christ as our sacrifice, or approach him as our mercy-seat, we must carry, as it were, his blood with us, and sprinkle it on our consciences before him, as an acknowledgment that by the justice of God we were deservedly condemned, and that we have no hope of mercy except in such a way as will consist with the immutable rights of justice. Thus it is not sufficient for *Christ* to have honoured divine justice once by enduring its penalties; but *every individual sinner* must also honour it for himself by an explicit acknowledgment, that its demands must be satisfied.]

3. In *pardoning sinners out of respect to* this propitiation—

[That sinners are justified through Christ, may well appear an act of transcendent *mercy:* but it is also an act of *justice;* and the justice of God is as much displayed in it, as it would be in consigning sinners over to everlasting perdition. It is not an act of mercy, but of justice, to liberate a man whose debt has been discharged by a surety. But when Christ has paid our debt, and we, in consequence of that payment, claim our discharge, we may expect it even on the footing of justice itself. And whereas it is found, that no living creature ever applied to God in vain, when he pleaded Christ's vicarious sacrifice, it is manifest, that God has been jealous of his own honour, and has been as anxious to pay to *us* what Christ has purchased for us, as to exact of *him* what he undertook to pay on our behalf: so that his justice is as conspicuous in *pardoning us,* as it has been in *punishing him.*]

INFER—

1. How certain is the salvation of believers!

[That which principally alarms those who stand before a human tribunal, is an apprehension that justice may declare against them. But there is no such cause for alarm on the part of a believer, seeing that justice is no less on his side than mercy. Let all then look to Christ as their all-sufficient propitiation, and to God as both "a just God and a Saviour." Then shall they find "that God is faithful and *just* to forgive them their sins[e]," yea, is "just *in* justifying all that believe."]

2. How awful will be the condemnation of unbelievers!

[While they slight the united overtures of mercy and justice, what do they but arm both these attributes against

[d] Lev. xvi. 2, 14. [e] 1 John i. 9.

them? *Now*, if they would seek for mercy, justice, instead of impeding, would aid, their suit. *At the last day*, how will matters be reversed! When justice demands the execution of the law, mercy will have not one word to say in arrest of judgment, but will rather increase the vengeance by its accusations and complaints. Let this be duly considered by us, that we may *actively* glorify God as monuments of his saving grace, and not *passively* glorify him as objects of his righteous indignation.]

MDCCCXXXIV.

JUSTIFICATION WITHOUT BOASTING.

Rom. iii. 27, 28. *Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.*

IT may well be supposed, that any revelation, purporting to be from God, should, in addition to all external evidences, have internal proofs also of its divine original. Accordingly, if God should reveal a way of salvation to fallen creatures, we should of course expect it to be such a way, as should display the riches of his own grace, and secure all the glory of it to himself. Now when we look into the Gospel, we find precisely such a method of salvation revealed to us. And herein it differs from all the methods that ever have been devised by man: for *they* uniformly reserve *a share* of the glory, at least, to the creature: whereas *the Gospel* gives *all* the glory to God alone.

St. Paul, having opened throughout the whole preceding part of this epistle the state of fallen man, and the way prescribed for his acceptance with God, puts this question, "Where is boasting then?" And having told us, that it is, and must for ever be, "excluded by the law of faith," he repeats his former conclusion, and represents it as confirmed by this additional evidence of its truth; "*Therefore* we conclude," &c.

In discoursing on these words, we shall shew,

I. That the way of salvation (whatever it may be) must exclude boasting—

This will appear undeniably true, if we consider,

1. The avowed design of God in the revelation he has given us—

[St. Paul speaking on this subject, repeats even to tautology, that God designed from the beginning to exalt his own grace, and had so planned the way of salvation, as that every part of it might redound to his own honour[a]. All possibility of glorying was studiously cut off from man. With this view the knowledge of this salvation was imparted to the poor and ignorant in preference to the wise and noble[b]; and every person that embraced it was necessitated to seek every thing in and through Christ, that "the loftiness of man might be laid low, and that God alone might be exalted[c]."]

2. The disposition and conduct of all that have ever embraced it—

[*Abraham*, the father of the faithful, accounted himself only "dust and ashes[d]:" "nor had he any thing whereof to glory before God[e]." *Job*, "a perfect and upright man, so that none was like him upon earth," yet spake with the utmost abhorrence of justifying himself before God[f]. *David*, "a man after God's own heart," cries, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified[g]." *Isaiah*, that most distinguished prophet, lamented that he was vile as a leper[h]; and confessed that his righteousnesses were as "filthy rags[i]." *St. Paul*, who was "not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles," yea, "laboured more abundantly than they all," acknowledges himself the very "chief of sinners[k]," desires to be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness[l], and boils with indignation at the thought of glorying in any thing but the "cross of Christ[m]."

If any might glory in themselves, we might suppose that the glorified saints and angels would have liberty to do so: but among them there is one only theme, "*Worthy is the Lamb*[n]."

Now if the way of salvation (whatever it may be) correspond with God's design in revealing it, or with the dispositions of those who have been the most distinguished ornaments of it, then it must of necessity cut off from man all occasion of

[a] Eph. i. 5—7, 9, 11, 12, 14. and ii. 4, 5, 7—9, especially ver. 7.
[b] 1 Cor. i. 26—29. [c] 1 Cor. i. 30, 31. with Isai. ii. 17.
[d] Gen. xviii. 27. [e] Rom. iv. 2.
[f] Job ix. 2, 3, 20, 21, 30, 31. and xlii. 6. [g] Ps. cxliii. 2.
[h] Isai. vi. 5. with Lev. xiii. 45. [i] Isai. lxiv. 6.
[k] 1 Tim. i. 15. [l] Phil. iii. 8, 9. [m] Gal. vi. 14.
[n] Rev. v. 11, 13.

glorying in himself. We may say therefore with the Apostle, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded."]

Having determined this point, let us proceed to inquire,

II. What is that way of salvation which alone does exclude boasting—

There are but two possible ways in which any man can be saved, namely, *by works*, or *by faith*. Many indeed have attempted to unite them; but *that* is impossible, seeing that they are distinct from, and directly opposed to each other[o]. Let us then inquire which of the two excludes boasting?

1. Does the law of works?

[The law of works says, "Do this, and live." Now suppose a man to be saved by his own obedience to this law; will he not have to boast? May he not say to a perishing fellow-creature, "I made myself to differ from you?" May he not justly take credit to himself for his own superior goodness? yea, even in heaven, may he not unite his own praises with those of his Maker, and ascribe salvation partly to himself?

It is of no use to say, that our works are only *in part* the ground of our acceptance; and that even for them we are indebted to the operation of Divine grace: for, works are *works*, by whomsoever they are wrought in us; and, as being wrought in and by us, they are *our* works; and in whatever degree they form the ground of our justification before God, in that degree (be it little or great) they give us a ground of glorying: and to deny this, is to confound grace and works, which are as distinct, and as irreconcileable with each other, as light and darkness[p].]

2. Does the law of faith?

[This says, "Believe and be saved." By this law we are constrained to receive every thing out of the Redeemer's fulness, and to acknowledge *him* as our "ALL IN ALL." Nothing is left for us to ascribe to ourselves. *The planning* of salvation was the work of God the Father: *the procuring* of it was the work of God the Son: *the imparting, continuing, and perfecting* of it is the work of God the Holy Ghost. We cannot glory over a fellow-sinner, and say, "God had respect to my good qualities, (*either seen* or *foreseen*) and on account of *them* distinguished me from you:" no room is left but for shame to ourselves, and gratitude to God.

[o] Rom. xi. 6. [p] Rom. xi. 6.

Here then we may boldly say with the Apostle, "By what law is boasting excluded? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith."]

It remains then for us to inquire,

III. What conclusion we are to draw from these premises—

Nothing can be more *express* than the conclusion drawn by the Apostle—

[We have seen that the way of salvation (whatever it be) excludes boasting; and that salvation by *faith* is the only way that does exclude boasting: from hence therefore the conclusion is plain, that salvation must be by faith and not by works.

But there is an emphasis in the Apostle's words which deserves particular attention. He does not merely affirm that salvation is by faith rather than by works, but by faith *exclusive of works*. No "deeds of the law" are to be added to faith in order to render it effectual: we must be saved by faith simply, by faith solely. If any work whatever be added to our faith as a joint ground of our hope, or as a motive to induce God to justify us, or as a price whereby we are to obtain an interest in Christ, "faith will be made void, and the promise will be of none effect[q]." We must not trust any more in our good works than in our vilest sins: for the very instant that the smallest stress whatever is laid on our good works *as procuring our justification before God*, boasting is introduced, and all hope of salvation is annihilated. Not even faith itself saves us *as a work*, but *solely as uniting us to Christ*, by whose righteousness we are justified.]

Nor can any thing be more *certain* than the conclusion drawn by the Apostle—

[When *men* argue, even from the clearest premises, we must be cautious in admitting their conclusions; because they frequently put more into their conclusions than their premises will bear. Indeed, it is necessary to watch every step of their arguments, because of the fallacies which often escape their own observation, and would, if unguardedly acceded to, mislead our judgment also. But no suspicion need be entertained respecting the point before us, since the premises are stated, and the conclusion is drawn, by God himself. If we will dispute about the one or the other, we must debate the matter with God; for it is to God's arguments, and not to man's, that our assent is now required.]

[q] Rom. iv. 14.

Before we conclude, we will CONSIDER some OBJECTIONS that may be urged against the foregoing statement. It may be said that,

1. It contradicts many positive assertions of Holy Scripture—

[Our Lord does, in answer to the young man's inquiry, "What shall I *do* to inherit eternal life?" say, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments[r]." But our Lord did not mean to say, that *he*, a fallen creature, *could* keep the commandments, so as to obtain eternal life by them: his answer was intended to shew him, that he must not seek for life in *such* a way: and, to convince him that he had not kept the commandments so perfectly as he supposed, our Lord put him to the test; and gave him thereby a very convincing proof, that he must seek salvation in another way, namely, by becoming *his* disciple, and embracing *his* salvation.

There are many other passages that speak of our works being rewarded: and it is true, that works done in faith, will receive a reward of grace. But is there no difference between a *sinner's* being *justified* by the *merit* of his works, and *a justified person's* receiving a reward of *grace* on account of his works? In the one case a man may boast, that he has, *in part at least*, purchased heaven: in the other case, he must acknowledge his justification to be altogether of grace; and his increased weight of glory to be from the superabounding riches of divine grace, *proportioned to his services*, but *not founded on his merits*.

But this matter is beyond a doubt: for we are told, that there *could not* be a law given that should give life to fallen man: and that *that* was the very reason why a different way of salvation was prescribed to him[s]. So that whatever is said in the Scriptures respecting the reward which God will give to our works, we may be sure they never can be rewarded *on the ground of merit*, nor can we ever obtain life by the performance of them.]

2. It encourages people to disregard good works—

[If this objection were founded in truth, we should think it sufficient to invalidate all that the Apostle himself could say in confirmation of the text: for we may be well assured, that God can reveal nothing, that in its consequences is destructive of morality. But why should it be thought injurious to good works, to affirm, that they cannot justify us before God? Is there no other end for which they should be performed, than to purchase heaven by them? Are they not necessary to prove

[r] Matt. xix. 16, 17. [s] Gal. iii. 21, 22.

the sincerity of our faith? Do they not honour God, and benefit our fellow-creatures, and strengthen the religious principle within us, and tend to make us *meet* for heaven, yea, and (as has been observed above) increase our happiness in heaven? If we affirm that food is of no use to clothe us, or that clothes are of no use to feed us, do we teach men to despise food and clothing, merely because we deny their utility for purposes for which they never were designed? Surely there are motives enough to the practice of good works, without urging one, which, if entertained in the mind, would at once destroy all their value in the sight of God.

But let us see whether experience gives any countenance to this objection. Were Abraham, David, Paul, regardless of good works, because they believed that they must be justified by faith without works? Were those who are so justly celebrated for their faith in the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews, inattentive to good works, when they chose the most cruel torments, and even death itself, in preference to an accusing conscience? We may even appeal to you respecting those of our own day; who are they that are condemned for their strictness and sanctity? they who exalt the *merit* of good works, or those who maintain justification by faith alone?

See then how little reason there is for this objection.]

In fine, we shall ADDRESS a few words,

1. To those who are yet cleaving to the law of works—

[None but they who are taught of God, can conceive how prone we are to self-righteousness, or how subtle are its workings in the heart. We may accede to every idea that has been suggested, and yet be secretly founding our hopes on something that we have done, or that we intend to do; or, which is the same in effect, seeking to recommend ourselves to Christ, that he may become our Saviour.

We entreat you, brethren, to be on your guard, lest, after all your good wishes and desires, you be proved to have built upon a foundation of sand, and be left to inherit your own *deserts*.]

2. To those who embrace the law of faith—

[Much depends on your conduct: the eyes of the world are upon you; and they will be ready to spy out every blemish in you, in order to justify their rejection of your sentiments. Others may commit a thousand sins, and escape censure: but, if *you* be guilty of any thing amiss, all mouths are open, not against you only, but against your principles, and against all who maintain them. We say then, with the Apostle, "Let them that have believed, be careful to maintain good works."

Be much on your guard, that you "give no occasion to the enemies to speak reproachfully:" but rather endeavour to "put to silence the ignorance of foolish men by well-doing." Thus will you "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour," and give a practical refutation of the calumnies that are circulated respecting you.]

MDCCCXXXV.

FAITH ESTABLISHES THE LAW.

Rom. iii. 31. *Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.*

A GENERAL prejudice obtains against the way of salvation by faith: but it prevailed equally even in the apostolic age. Paul himself saw that his statement of the Gospel did not escape censure. He perceived that it was deemed injurious to the interests of morality; he therefore anticipated and answered this objection.

To bring the subject fully before you, I will propose for your consideration three things—the objection made—the objection obviated—the objection retorted.

I. The objection made—

People suppose we make void the law through faith; but the truth, however clearly we may state it is, for the most part, misapprehended. In explaining salvation by faith we affirm two things concerning the law:

1. That it has no power either to condemn or to justify a believer—

[It cannot *condemn* him, because Christ has redeemed him from its curse[a]. It cannot *justify* him, because he has transgressed it, and its demands of perfect obedience are unalterably the same. Faith in Christ delivers him from the penal sanctions of the law, but does not in any respect lower its demands.]

2. That his obedience to it makes no part of his justifying righteousness—

[a] Gal. iii. 13.

[Faith and works, *as grounds of justification*, are opposite to each other[b]. If our works had any share in our justification we should have a ground of boasting; which is utterly to be excluded[c]. The smallest reliance on our works makes void all hope by the Gospel[d]. All dependence therefore on the works of the law must be entirely renounced.]

These affirmations evidently exclude morality from the office of justifying. They are therefore supposed to discountenance all practical religion; but this mistake originates in the ignorance of the objectors themselves.

This will be seen, whilst we notice,

II. The objection obviated—

The believer, so far from making void the law, establishes it. The power of the law is twofold; to command obedience, and to condemn for disobedience. The believer establishes the law in each of these respects:

1. In its commanding power:

[He owns its absolute authority over him as God's creature; all his hope is in the perfect obedience which Christ paid to it for him; he looks upon his obligations to obey it as increased, rather than vacated, by the death of Christ; he actually desires to obey it as much as if he were to be justified by his obedience to it.]

2. In its condemning power:

[He acknowledges himself justly condemned by it: he founds his hope in Christ as having borne its curse for him: his own conscience cannot be pacified but by that atonement which satisfied the demands of the law: bereft of a hope in the atonement, he would utterly despair: he flees to Christ continually "to bear the iniquity of his holiest actions."]

Thus he magnifies the law, while the objector himself, as I will now prove, makes it void.

To see this more fully, consider,

III. The objection retorted—

The person who objects to salvation by faith alone, is in reality the one who makes void the law. Objections against the doctrine of faith are raised from a pretended regard for the law; but the person who

[b] Rom. xi. 6. [c] Rom. iii. 27. [d] Gal. v. 2, 4.

blends faith and works effectually undermines the whole authority of the law. He undermines,

1. Its commanding power—

[He is striving to do something which may serve in part as a ground of his justification; but he can do nothing which is not imperfect; therefore he shews that he considers the law as less rigorous in its demands than it really is: consequently he robs it in a measure of its commanding power.]

2. Its condemning power—

[He never thoroughly feels himself a lost sinner; he does not freely acknowledge that he might be justly cursed even for his most holy actions; he even looks for justification on account of that which in itself deserves nothing but condemnation: and what is this but to lower its condemning power?]

Thus the advocates for the law are, in fact, its greatest enemies; whereas the advocates for the Gospel are the truest friends to the law also—

INFER—

1. How absurd is it for persons to decide on religion without ever having studied its doctrines!

[In human sciences men forbear to lay down their dogmas without some previous knowledge of the points on which they decide; but in theology, all, however ignorant, think themselves competent to judge. They indeed, who are taught of God, can judge; but unenlightened reason does not qualify us to determine. Let us beware of indulging prejudices against the truth. Let us seek to be "guided into all truth by the Holy Spirit."]

2. How excellent is the salvation revealed to us in the Gospel!

[Salvation by faith is exactly suited to man's necessities. It is also admirably calculated to advance the honour of God. Every man that is saved magnifies the law, and consequently the lawgiver. The *commanding and condemning power* of the law are *equally* glorified by the sinner's dependence on the obedience and sufferings of Christ: but in those who are condemned, *its sanctions only* are honoured. Thus is the law more honoured in the salvation of one, than in the destruction of the whole human race. Let all then admire and embrace this glorious salvation.]

MDCCCXXXVI.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE.

Rom. iv. 1—8. *What shall we then say that Abraham, our father as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*

THE mind of man, however open to conviction from the plain deductions of reason, is susceptible of peculiarly strong impressions from that species of argument, which, at the same time that it addresses itself to his intellect, has a tendency to engage his feelings, and to enlist his prejudices in its favour. All the prejudices of the Jews were in favour of Abraham their father, and of David, the greatest of their monarchs, and one of the most distinguished of their prophets: and, if the conduct of these two could be adduced as precedents, there would need but little further argument to convince a Jew, that the thing which was so recommended was right. Of this prejudice St. Paul availed himself in the passage before us. He had proved, beyond all reasonable doubt, that the justification of a sinner was, and must be, solely by faith in Christ: he had proved it from the guilty state of all, whether Jews or Gentiles, (which precluded a possibility of their being justified by any works of their own[a];) and from the Lord Jesus Christ having been sent into the world to make an atonement for sin, and thereby to reconcile the demands of justice with the exercise of mercy. He had shewn, that this way of salvation cut off all occasion of boasting, and was equally suited both to Jews and

[a] Rom. iii. 20.

Gentiles; and that, instead of invalidating the law, as at first sight it might appear to do, it did in reality establish the law.

Having thus proved his point *by argument*, he now comes to confirm it *by example;* and he adduces such examples, as the Jews could not but regard as of the highest authority.

We must bear in mind what the point is which he is endeavouring to maintain: it is, That the justification of the soul before God is not by works of any kind, but simply, and solely, by faith in Christ. This he proceeds to prove from the examples,

I. Of Abraham—

What (he asks) did Abraham, the great progenitor of the Jewish nation, find effectual for *his* salvation? This he answers,

1. By an express declaration of Holy Writ—

[The manner in which he appeals to the decision of Scripture is well worthy of notice. "What saith the Scripture?" It matters little, what this or that *man* may say: we must abide by what *God* has spoken. *His* word shall stand, though the whole universe should rise up to contradict it. On *that* therefore we must found our sentiments, and on that alone: if men speak according to his word and testimony, it is well: "if not," whatever may be their pretences to wisdom, "there is no light in them[b]."

Now the Scripture declares, that "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness[c]" ———In the passages referred to, there were two promises made to him: the one was, that one particular "seed should be given to him, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed;" and the other was, that a spiritual seed should be given him, who should be "numerous as the stars of heaven." These promises he firmly believed; and so believed them, as actually to repose all his hope and trust in that promised Seed, who was to be the Saviour of the whole world. "This faith of his was counted to him for righteousness;" or, in other words, this Saviour, on whom his faith reposed, was made the source of righteousness and salvation to his soul.

This particular declaration of Holy Writ is referred to by the Apostle a great many times, on account of its singular importance: but, as its importance will more fully appear in the

[b] Isai. viii. 20. [c] Gen. xii. 1—3. with xv. 5, 6.

sequel of our discourse, we shall proceed to notice how St. Paul answers his own question.]

2. By arguments founded upon it—

[He justly observes, that, when the Scripture thus represents Abraham as justified by faith, all works are of necessity excluded from any participation in the office of justifying: for if it be supposed that a man is justified, either in whole or in part, by his works, his reward would come to him as a debt, and not as a gift. However great the distance may be between the work and the reward, it will make no difference with respect to this point: if the work be proposed as the ground of the reward, and be performed in order to merit that reward, then is the reward a debt which may be justly claimed, and cannot with justice be withheld. Moreover, if works be thus admitted as purchasing or procuring the reward, then may the person who performs them have a ground of glorying in himself: he may say with truth, This *I earned*; this *I merited*; this *could not justly have been withheld from me.* But had Abraham any such ground of glorying? No: the Scripture denies that he had, in that it ascribes his salvation, not to any righteousness of his own, but to a righteousness imputed to him, and apprehended by faith only.

But whilst the Apostle argues thus strongly and incontrovertibly on the passage he has cited, we must not overlook the peculiarly forcible language which he uses, and which, if it had not been used by him, *we* should scarcely have dared to use. In declaring who the person is that is thus justified, he tells us, that it is the person "who *worketh not*" (with a view to obtain justification by his works), but "believeth on him that justifieth *the ungodly.*" Of course the Apostle is not to be understood as saying, that the justified person will *continue* "ungodly," or that he will "not work," *after he has been justified*; but only as saying, that he does not work *with a view to obtain* justification, or come *as a godly person* to receive a recompence: in coming to the Saviour, he will bring nothing but *his sins* with him, in order that he may be delivered from them, and obtain an interest in the Redeemer's righteousness, in which he may be clothed and stand before God without spot or blemish. But still the terms are such as to mark with the utmost force and precision, that, from the office of justifying, works must be for ever excluded; and that we must, like Abraham, be justified by a righteousness not our own; a righteousness which cuts off all occasion of glorying, and which makes our salvation to be altogether of grace.]

But, as to the Apostle's arguments several objections may be made, we will endeavour to state and answer them.

1. This statement of Abraham's being justified by faith is directly contradicted by St. James—

[St. James, it is true, does say that Abraham was justified by *his works*; and specifies the offering up of his son Isaac as the work for which he was justified: and farther declares, that in that act the passage quoted by St. Paul received its accomplishment[d]. But here is no opposition between the two Apostles; as the scope of the context in the two passages will clearly evince. St. James is evidently speaking of the difference between a living and a dead faith; and he shews that Abraham clearly proved his to be a living faith, by the fruits it produced[e]. But St. Paul is speaking of the way in which Abraham was justified before God: and the faith whereby Abraham was justified, was actually exercised *forty years before* the time that St. James speaks of[f]: which we consider as a decisive proof of these two things, namely, that Abraham was justified (in St. Paul's sense of that term) by faith without works; and next, that St. James did not intend to contradict St. Paul, but only to guard his doctrines from abuse.]

2. Though it was not for offering up his son that God justified Abraham, yet it was for another act of obedience, namely, his submitting to circumcision—

[This idea is entertained by many, who oppose the doctrine of justification by faith alone: but it is as erroneous as that before stated: for Abraham had no son at all, when he exercised faith in God's promises, and by that faith was justified before God: and he had waited some years in expectation of the promised seed, before Sarah gave him her servant Hagar to wife[g]: and Ishmael was thirteen years old when God renewed his covenant with Abraham, and enjoined him the use of circumcision: so that, in this, as in the former case, Abraham was *justified many years before* the act took place for which our objector would suppose him to be justified. And this is so important an observation, that St. Paul, in the verses following our text, dwells upon it with all the emphasis imaginable[h] ——— deducing from it a truth which is of infinite importance to us, namely, that, as Abraham was justified in his uncircumcised state, he is as truly the father of us uncircumcised Gentiles, as he is of his lineal descendants, the circumcised Jews.]

[d] Jam. ii. 21—23. [e] Jam. ii. 18.

[f] The faith by which Abraham was justified was exercised twenty years before Isaac was born. See Gen. xv. 5, 6. And we suppose Isaac to have been at least twenty years old when his father offered him up.

[g] Gen. xvi. 3. [h] ver. 9—11. with Gen. xvii. 23.

3. If we are constrained to acknowledge, as indeed we must, that Abraham was justified by faith without works, yet that was *a personal favour to him* on account of the extraordinary strength of his faith, and *not to be drawn into a precedent for us*—

[But this also is as erroneous as either of the foregoing objections: for though it is certain that he is celebrated above all men for the strength of his faith, and that the exercises of his faith are recorded to his honour, yet it is expressly affirmed by St. Paul, that "it was *not written for Abraham's sake alone*, that faith was imputed to him for righteousness, *but for us also*, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification[i]."]

Having thus considered the example of Abraham, we proceed to notice, that,

II. Of David—

The passage which St. Paul adduces from the Psalms of David, in confirmation of his argument, is peculiarly deserving of our attention[k].

In the words themselves, *we*, if not directed by an inspired Apostle, should not have found any decisive evidence of justification by faith alone—

[There is nothing in it respecting imputation of righteousness, but only of a non-imputation of sin. That non-imputation, or forgiveness of sin, might, for aught that appears in that passage to the contrary, be obtained by works: for there is nothing said about faith in Christ, or indeed about faith at all. Moreover, the words, as they stand in the psalm, and are followed by what is spoken of a guileless spirit, seem to intimate the very reverse of what St. Paul has deduced from them, namely, that a man, who, *in consideration of his guileless spirit*, has his infirmities forgiven, is a blessed man.]

But St. Paul has, by Divine direction, put a sense upon them which beyond all possibility of doubt determines the question before us—

[He tells us, that David in this passage "describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works." Here it is not possible to shut our eyes against the doctrine of imputed righteousness. We do not approve of taking one or two particular expressions, and giving

[i] ver. 20—25. [k] Ps. xxxii. 1, 3

them in our discourses a prominence and importance which they do not hold in the inspired volume. But we equally disapprove of keeping out of view any doctrine which is clearly taught in the Holy Scriptures: and we must say, that the doctrine of "righteousness imputed to us without works," is more clearly taught here, than if it had been maintained in a long and elaborate course of argument; because it is introduced so incidentally, and because the Apostle goes, if we may so speak, so much out of his way on purpose to introduce it. To introduce it, he represents David as saying, what (*in words*) he did not say; and he omits some very important words which he actually did say. It is observable, that St. Paul stops short in his quotation, and leaves out those words of David, "and in whose spirit there is no guile." And why did he omit them? We apprehend, for this reason. If he had inserted them, he might have been supposed to countenance the idea, that, though we are justified by faith, yet it is not by faith *only*, but by faith either *as connected with* a guileless spirit, or as *productive of* a guileless spirit: whereas we are justified by it, not *as united with holy dispositions*, nor *as an operative principle* in the soul, but *simply and solely as apprehending Christ*, in and through whom we are justified. Thus by a remarkable *addition*, and by a no less remarkable *omission*, he brings the words of David to bear upon his point, and to prove what is of incalculable importance to every soul of man.

We would earnestly wish these words of David to be understood in their full import, as declaring explicitly, that we are to be justified by a righteousness not our own, nor obtained by any works of ours; but by a righteousness imputed to us, and apprehended entirely by faith, even by the "righteousness of Christ, which is unto all, and upon all them that believe[l]."]

From hence then we may SEE, how incontrovertibly the doctrine of justification by faith alone is established; and,

1. How far it is from being a *new* doctrine—

[Wherever this doctrine is preached, a clamour is raised against it, just as it was in the Apostle's days[m], as a "*new* doctrine:" but let any one look into our Articles and Homilies, and see, whether it be not the doctrine of our Church. It is that very doctrine which constituted the basis of the Reformation — — — Then let us go back to the apostolic age: Can any one read the epistles to the Romans and the Galatians, and doubt what St. Paul thought of it? If we go farther back, to David and to Abraham, we see that they sought

[l] Rom. iii. 22. [m] Acts xvii. 19.

salvation in no other way than simply by faith in Christ: and we may go farther still, even to Adam, whose views were precisely the same, and who had no hope but in "the Seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head." There has been but one way of salvation for fallen man from the beginning of the world: nor shall there be any other as long as the world shall stand[n]. If it be *new* in any place, the fault is not in him that preaches it, but in those who have preceded him, who have neglected to preach it. Dismiss then this prejudice; and receive the glad tidings of a Saviour with all the joy and gratitude that the occasion demands.]

2. How far it is from being an *unimportant* doctrine—

[Many who do not reject the doctrine itself, yet consider it as a merely speculative doctrine, a mere strife of words. But our reformers did not so think it, when they sealed the truth of it with their blood. Nor did St. Paul think it so, when he denounced a curse against any man, yea even against any angel from heaven, that should attempt to establish any doctrine that interfered with it[o]. See how strongly he guards us against any dependence whatever upon our own works, as entirely invalidating the whole Gospel, and destroying utterly all our hope in Christ[p]— It was owing to the aversion which the Jews had to this doctrine, that so few of them were saved; whilst the Gentiles, who felt less difficulty in submitting to it, were brought in vast multitudes into the kingdom of our Lord[q]. Know then, that this doctrine of justification by faith alone without works, is absolutely necessary to be received, and known, and felt, and gloried in; and that if we build on any other foundation, we must inevitably and eternally perish[r].]

3. How far it is from being a *discouraging* doctrine—

[Another calumny generally circulated respecting justification by faith, is, that it is an alarming and terrifying doctrine, and calculated not only to bewilder weak persons, but even to deprive them of their senses. But the very reverse of this is true. Doubtless, before that this doctrine can be received aright, a man must be made sensible that he is in a guilty and undone state, and incapable of effecting his own salvation by any works of righteousness which he can do: but when once a person is brought to that state, the doctrine of a full salvation wrought out for him by Christ, and freely offered to him "without money and without price," is replete with consolation: it is marrow and fatness to the soul; "it is meat

[n] Acts iv. 12. [o] Gal. i. 8, 9. [p] Gal. v. 2—4.
[q] Rom. ix. 30—32. [r] 1 Cor. iii. 11.

indeed, and drink indeed." Look at the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, and see the effect of this doctrine upon them[s]. Look at the Ethiopian Eunuch, and at the whole city of Samaria, when Philip had preached it to them[t]; and then you will see the proper tendency of the doctrine, and the sure effect of it wherever it is received. If any works of ours were required to purchase salvation, that doctrine might well drive men to despair: for, it would be like telling the wounded Israelites, when they were in the very article of death, to perform some arduous feats in order to procure their restoration to health; or rather, like telling the dead to raise themselves in order to their enjoyment of life. But the erection of the brazen serpent, that the dying might look unto it and live, is a lively emblem of that salvation which is offered to the world through faith in a crucified Redeemer: and the more pungent is the grief which any feel on account of their guilt and helplessness, the richer is the consolation which will flow into their souls the very instant they believe the glad tidings of the Gospel.]

4. How far it is from being a *licentious* doctrine—

[There is no end to the calumnies raised against this doctrine, and against all who maintain it. The preachers of it, even those who are most sober, and most guarded, and most practical, are always represented as saying, that, if only men will believe, they may live as they please. But there is nothing more contrary to truth than such a representation as this. We always affirm, that though works are excluded from the office of justifying the soul, they are indispensably necessary to prove the sincerity of our faith; and that the faith which is not productive of good works, is no better than the faith of devils. And then, as to the actual effects which are produced by this doctrine, look back to our reformers: look back to St. Paul, the great champion of this doctrine: look back to David, and to Abraham, and to all the saints recorded in the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews: or if you wish for living examples, look to thousands who maintain and glory in this blessed doctrine. We will appeal to matter of fact: who are the persons that in every place are spoken of as precise, and righteous overmuch, and as making the way to heaven so strait that nobody can walk in it? Are not these the very persons, even these who maintain salvation by faith alone? That there are some who do not adorn this doctrine, is true enough: and so there were in the apostolic age. But do we not bear our testimony against them, as well as against the self-righteous contemners of the Gospel, yea, with far greater severity than

[s] Acts ii. 46, 47. [t] Acts viii. 8, 39.

against any other class of sinners whatever? Be it remembered then, that the Gospel is "a doctrine according to godliness;" and that "the grace of God which bringeth salvation teaches us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live righteously, soberly, and godlily in this present world." And we now declare before all, that they who profess the Gospel in words, and deny it in their works, will have a less tolerable portion in the day of judgment than Tyre and Sidon, or even Sodom and Gomorrha.]

MDCCCXXXVII.

THE PARDONED BLESSED.

Rom. iv. 7, 8. *Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin*[a].

TO enter into the real scope of these words, it will be proper to compare them with the Psalm from whence they are cited. In themselves, they are simple, and easy to be understood: but taken in their connexion with the context before us, and with the interpretation put upon them by the Apostle, they are involved in considerable difficulty: and more especially, when we observe the peculiar omission of the closing words of David, which seem necessary to a just exhibition of his mind, and a full comprehension of his meaning, we are rather surprised at the way in which they are here referred to, and at the obscurity that is thrown around them. On comparing the two passages together, we find the Apostle, in appearance at least, adding to David's words what he never distinctly uttered, and omitting a very essen-

[a] The Author's uniform rule has been, where passages in the Old Testament are cited in the New Testament (which in some instances occurs several times), to treat them only once. Here he deviates from his accustomed plan, because, in his Discourse on Ps. xxxii. 1—6. his object was to trace *David's experience* as there delineated: whereas the two first verses of that Psalm which are here cited, being of singular importance in relation to *Christian experience in general*, he treats them here again: and, if this Discourse be made use of by any one, the two first verses of Ps. xxxii. may be adopted as the text, in preference to them as here cited by the Apostle. In that case, however, the Exordium must be a little changed.

tial part of what he did utter. But the Apostle spake by inspiration of God; and if we attentively consider his statement, we shall not only find it unexceptionable, but shall feel greatly indebted to him for throwing much additional light upon a most interesting and important passage of Holy Writ.

To unfold these words so that they may be clearly and fully understood, I will,

I. Explain their true import—

This will appear if we consider David's words,

1. According to the plain meaning of the terms themselves—

["Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered." It is an acknowledged truth, that sin, by whomsoever committed, involves the soul in guilt, and subjects it to God's heavy displeasure. And how terrible his wrath is, no words can express, no imagination can conceive. But, if a man have attained the forgiveness of his sins, his obligation to punishment is cancelled, and he is liberated from all the miseries to which, without such forgiveness, he must have been subjected to all eternity. Now who that contemplates this great deliverance, must not congratulate the man on his escape? Who must not account him "blessed?" To have the punishment due to his offences mitigated, or to have them shortened to the space of ten thousand years, would be a state of comparative blessedness; but to have it altogether *remitted*, must surely entitle the man to conceive of himself as truly "blessed."]

2. According to the construction put upon them by St. Paul—

[St. Paul says, that David in these words "described the blessedness of the man, to whom God imputeth righteousness without works[b]." Now this does not appear in the words themselves, nor should we ever have known that such an idea was comprehended in them, if we had not been assured of it by God himself, that is, by an Apostle writing under his immediate inspiration. But, being so instructed, we know for certain that this construction of the words is unquestionably correct.

The fact is, that no one ever has his sins pardoned without having at the same time the righteousness of Christ imputed to him for his acceptance before God. We sometimes distin-

[b] ver. 6.

guish between the active and passive righteousness of Christ, as if his death atoned for our sins, and his obedience to the law constituted a meritorious righteousness, to be made over to us in a way of imputation[c]: and this may perhaps be warranted by what is said by the Apostle, "Christ, who knew no sin, was made sin (a sin-offering) for us, that we (who neither had, nor could have, any righteousness of our own) might be made the righteousness of God in him[d]." But whatever ground there may appear to be in Scripture for this distinction, the two can never be separated from each other: the whole of Christ's life and sufferings constituted *his one obedience unto death*, by which salvation, in its full extent, was purchased for us[e]: and he who partakes of salvation, receives it, *not in part only*, but in the full extent to which it has been obtained for him. It is obvious that a man whose iniquities stood in need of pardon, could not purchase heaven by any merits of his own. He could neither possess, nor procure by any works of his own, a righteousness wherein to stand before God. Yet such a righteousness he must have: and if he ever possess such a righteousness, it must be, by having the righteousness of another imputed to him. When therefore the Apostle quotes the words of David, he puts upon them the true construction which they were designed to bear: for though David, *in words*, speaks only of a non-imputation of sin, he must of necessity be considered as speaking also of an imputation of righteousness without works, seeing that the one is of necessity involved in the other, and can never exist without it.

Now then take the words of David in *this* sense, and say whether that man who is clothed in the robe of the Redeemer's righteousness, and so covered, that God himself cannot behold a spot or blemish in him, be not "blessed[f]?" Surely it is impossible to entertain a doubt of this, or to withhold for a moment our assent to David's assertion, according to the construction put upon it by the Apostle Paul.]

3. According as they stood associated in David's mind—

[David says, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, *and in whose spirit there is no guile.*" But these concluding words the Apostle entirely omits. What was his reason for this? Did Paul conceive that any man who was not purged from "guile" could be happy? or had he less jealousy on the subject of holiness than David? Why then did he stop short, and quote the words of David in such an imperfect way? Did he act thus by accident only, or by design? Surely this matter needs explanation.

[c] Rom. v. 19. [d] 2 Cor. v. 21. [e] Phil. ii. 8. [f] Eph. v. 27.

I doubt not but that he acted thus *by design*, exactly as our blessed Lord himself did in his first sermon that he ever preached, when, in citing the words of the Prophet Isaiah, he stopped short, when he came to the words which were irrelevant to his present subject, and never mentioned them at all[g]——— The Apostle was engaged in a most important topic, and establishing by argument the doctrine of justification by faith without works. He had shewn that Abraham, who had so abounded in good works, had nothing whereof he could glory, and that he had been justified solely by faith in the promised Seed[h]. He proceeds then to establish the same doctrine from the words of David, who had pronounced that man blessed, *not whose good works could avail, whether in whole or in part, for his justification before God*, but, "whose transgressions were forgiven, and whose sins were covered;" and who, consequently, if saved at all, must be saved by a righteousness imputed to him. But, if the Apostle had proceeded to cite the remaining words of David, he would have obscured his argument, and given occasion to an adversary to misrepresent, or at all events to misunderstand, his meaning. An adversary, if the last clause of David's words had been inserted by Paul, might have said, 'I agree with you, Paul: we are to be justified by faith: but then it is not by faith as apprehending the righteousness of another, but by faith as working out a righteousness for itself; or, in other words, not by faith without works, but by faith as an active, operative, sanctifying principle: and the person who possesses and exercises such a faith, has somewhat of his own to glory in.' Now *this* would have utterly subverted the Apostle's argument: and therefore the Apostle, not choosing to give occasion for any such objection to his statement, altogether omitted the words on which the adversary would have founded it. He could indeed easily have answered the objection: but he judged it best to cut off all occasion for it.

But David had no such reason for restraining his words; and therefore he gave full scope to what was in his mind; and knowing that the justifying office of Christ is never separated from the sanctifying office of the Holy Spirit, and that no man under the power of sin could be blessed, he added, "and in whose spirit there is no guile." He knew it would be to no purpose that a man was pardoned, if he was not also renewed in the spirit of his mind. Suppose Satan himself to be pardoned; suppose further, that he was admitted into heaven; he

[g] Compare Isai. lxi. 1, 2. with Luke iv. 17—19. where our Lord *stopped short in the middle of the sentence*, omitting all mention of "*vengeance*," when he wished to impress his hearers with nothing but the words of "*grace*."

[h] ver. 1—8.

could not be happy even there, unless he was made a new creature: for, being enslaved by all manner of evil dispositions, and under the influence of all his malignant habits, he would, though in heaven, be a devil still; and consequently far from any thing approximating to real blessedness. The very essence of happiness lies in a conformity to the Divine image: and he only who possesses that, is happy. The truly blessed man, and the only man that can be called "blessed," is "the Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile."]

The words of my text being thus explained, I proceed to,

II. Confirm the sentiment contained in them—

Here I speak without hesitation. The man thus justified through faith in Christ, and thus renewed by the Holy Spirit, *is* blessed. For,

1. In him are all the wonders of redeeming love accomplished—

[What did the Father design in giving his only dear Son to take our nature upon him? What, but that we might be "saved from wrath through him[i]?" And for what end did the Lord Jesus Christ shed his precious blood for us upon the cross, but "to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works[k]?" And for what purpose did the Holy Ghost come down and dwell in our hearts, but to transform us into the Divine image, and to "make us meet for the inheritance" which Christ has purchased for us? Now in the person before described, all these things are already attained. His sins are pardoned: the robe of Christ's righteousness is put upon him[l]: and he is "sanctified throughout in body, soul, and spirit[m]." Is not *he* then "blessed?" If not, I only ask, where will you find a "blessed" man on earth?]

2. In him all the great ends of life are answered—

[For what has God preserved our souls in life unto this hour, and given us so many opportunities for spiritual improvement? Has it not been that we might be brought to the knowledge of him, and into a state of acceptance with him, and to a conformity to his blessed image? That God has assigned us many works to do, and many duties to perform, I readily acknowledge: but they are all in subserviency to the great work of salvation. *That* is "the one thing needful:"

[i] Joh i iii. 16. and 1 John iv. 10.
[k] Tit. ii. 14.
[l] Rom. iii. 22.
[m] 1 Thess. v. 23.

and whatever we may have done, or whatever we may have attained, without *that*, we have done *nothing*, and attained *nothing*. Suppose us to have laboured successfully, and acquired crowns and kingdoms, what would they be in comparison of pardon, and peace, and holiness? Ask Solomon, who possessed a greater measure of earthly joys than any other man, what he thought of them? He pronounced them all to be "vanity and vexation of spirit:" so far were they from rendering him truly "blessed." The man possessed of earthly things knows not how soon he may have to relinquish them, and to curse the day that he ever attained them: but the man whom David pronounces "blessed," is prepared for every thing. He is prepared either for life, or death. If God see fit that he should live, he is prepared to fill up any station either of action or of suffering. In action, he will do every thing for God's honour; and in suffering, he will receive it all as from God, and improve it all for the advancement of his soul's eternal welfare. On the other hand, if God see fit to call him hence, he is ready to depart, at whatever hour his Lord shall call him. In fact, though willing to continue on earth his appointed time, "he is longing to be dissolved, that he may be with Christ." He numbers death amongst his richest treasures; and, in whatever shape it may come, he welcomes it, as Jacob did the waggons that were to bear him to the presence of his exalted and beloved Joseph.

I ask then now again, is not this man justly called "blessed?"]

3. In him is the felicity of heaven already begun—

[Wherein does the blessedness of heaven consist? Is it not in near access to God, in an assured consciousness of his love, and in an incessant ascription of praise to him? All this is begun in the believing and renewed soul. "God has shined into the heart of him whom he has pardoned and sanctified, and has revealed to him all the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ[n]." He even dwells in the bosom of the believer, and sheds abroad his love there, and enables him to "rejoice in the Saviour with a joy that is unspeakable and glorified," that is, of the very same nature with that which the glorified saints and angels possess in heaven. True, he enjoys these things but in part: but still the little he does enjoy, is both an earnest and a foretaste of what he shall one day be filled with to the utmost extent of his capacity for ever and ever.

It is needless that I pronounce *him* "blessed:" for I am well assured that there is not a soul here present that has not already anticipated me in this, and said, "O that I were that happy man!"]

[n] 2 Cor. iv. 6

Let me in conclusion ADDRESS a few words to,

1. Those who are seeking their happiness in earthly things—

[I will suppose you to have attained all that mortal man can possess: find me in all the sacred volume one single passage that pronounces *you* blessed. Find me but one single passage, and I will say, "Go on, and prosper." But I need only appeal to your own experience. What has all that you have ever attained done for you? Has it made you truly happy? You know it has not — — — Nothing short of that state which we have before contemplated can make you happy. Seek then blessedness where alone it can be found. Seek it in a reconciled God and Saviour. Seek it in a sense of his pardoning love, and in conformity to his mind and will. The creature, in its utmost fulness, is only "a cistern that will hold no water:" but in your Saviour you shall find "a Fountain of living waters."]

2. Those who profess to have attained the blessedness here spoken of—

["What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness!" Do but look at the millions around you, who are yet unpardoned, unsanctified, unsaved! What do you owe to God, who has made such a difference between you and others, yea, and between you and your former selves! Surely there should be no bounds to your gratitude, no limits to your devotion to such a Benefactor — — —]

MDCCCXXXVIII.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH NECESSARY TO THE HONOUR OF GOD, AND THE HAPPINESS OF MAN.

Rom. iv. 16. *Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed.*

TO many the doctrines of the Gospel appear mere arbitrary appointments; and justification by works seems as much entitled to our approbation as justification by faith alone. But the doctrines of the Gospel are grounded on absolute and indispensable necessity: we are shut up to them: we have no other ground of hope. After man had fallen, it was not possible that any law should be given him whereby he might regain his lost happiness. If such a law could have

been devised, God would have given it in preference to the plan of salvation provided in the Gospel; as St. Paul tells us; "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law[a]." But a Saviour was necessary; and justification by faith in him was necessary, indispensably necessary,

I. For the honour of God—

It is surely meet that God should have the undivided honour of all that he has done—

[He has made the universe for the express purpose of glorifying himself in the works of his hands[b]; and both the celestial and terrestrial bodies reflect upon him the honour due unto his name[c]. In the various dispensations of his providence also God has respect to his own glory, "upholding all things by the word of his power," and ordering all things, even from the rise and fall of empires to the preservation of a sparrow, or the falling of a hair from our head[d].

But, if in the works of creation and providence God have all the glory, shall he not much more have it in the work of redemption? Who first devised that wondrous work? The counsel of peace was between the Father and the Son from all eternity[e]. Who prevailed upon the Father to give his only Son out of his bosom to be our surety and substitute, and to accept his vicarious sacrifice in our behalf? All this was the result of God's "eternal purpose which he purposed in himself," "according to the counsel of his own will, and to the praise of the glory of his own grace[f]." We may further ask also, How is it that this salvation is imparted to the souls of men? Do men attract his notice first by their own superior merits? or do they of themselves begin to seek his favour? Does not God in every instance prevent them with the blessings of his goodness; and of his own good pleasure give them "both to will and to do[g]?" Now all this exercise of love and mercy is intended by God himself to shew to the whole universe "the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus[h]." Is he then, or is he not, to have the glory of this work? Is it meet, that, when he gives all, and his creatures receive all, the crown should be taken from his head, and be placed on the head of those, who, but for the superabundance of his grace, must all have perished like the fallen

[a] Gal. iii. 21. [b] Rev. iv. 11. [c] Ps. xix. 1.
[d] 1 Sam. ii. 6—8. Isai. xlv. 5—7. [e] Zech. vi. 13. Eph. iii. 9.
[f] Eph. i. 9—12. and iii. 10, 11. [g] Phil. ii. 13.
[h] Eph. ii. 7.

angels? We think that, however prejudiced any may be against the doctrine of justification by faith alone, it is impossible for them not to see, that man has no right to invade the prerogative of the Most High, and that "God cannot, consistently with his own honour, give his glory to another[i]."]

But, if man's salvation be in any measure by works, God will not have all the glory of it—

["Therefore is salvation by faith, *that it may be* by grace." Were it in any measure by works, it would become "*a debt*, and not a reward of grace[k]." Let but the smallest part of our reward be claimed as a debt, and there is an end of God's honour as the sole Author of our salvation. Man will have a right to boast: indeed he cannot but boast: he cannot but say, I paid a price for this benefit: whether the price be equal in value to the benefit conferred, is nothing to the purpose: it was the price demanded; and the man who pays this price may claim the benefit, as having performed the terms on which that benefit was suspended. To suppose that salvation can be of faith and of works at the same time, is absurd; the two are incompatible with each other: "if it be of works it cannot be of grace;" and "therefore it is of faith, that it may be by grace[l]."]

But justification by faith alone is yet further necessary,

II. For the happiness of man—

If justification were by works, "the promise would be sure" *to none*—

[Consider what must be done to secure the promised benefit: First, such a number of good works must be performed as shall be sufficient to purchase the remission of all our past sins. But who shall ascertain what measure of them shall suffice? or who, if it were ascertained, shall perform them? Next, such a number of good works must be performed as shall suffice to purchase eternal happiness and glory. And who shall tell us the amount of these that is required? or who will undertake to pay the price? Whatever is paid to purchase mercy for other acts, must need no mercy for itself: and how many of such acts can you produce? Nay further; it must be not only a perfect work, but a work of supererogation: for if it be a work that has been enjoined, you are still only "an unprofitable servant; you have done no more than was your duty to do." What store of such works have you wherewith to purchase heaven? But you will say, that God has mitigated the demands of his law, and is now satisfied with imperfect

[i] Isai. xlii. 8. [k] ver. 4. [l] Rom. xi. 6.

obedience. I ask, Where has he done so? and What is the measure of imperfection which he allows? Can you answer this? Can any human being answer it? But, for argument sake, you shall fix your own standard; you shall fix it where you please; and you shall be judged by nothing but your own law. Suppose that you have now fixed it; Have you from the beginning observed in all things *your own* law? Have you come up truly and habitually to your own standard? if not, you must be condemned out of your own mouth. Reduce the law to any thing you please, to sincerity, if you choose it; and I then ask, Are you *sincerely* abstaining from *every thing* which you believe to be evil, and doing *every thing* which you believe to be pleasing unto God, from day to day, from month to month, from year to year? Are you willing to found all your hopes of salvation on this? and are you content that all the promises of mercy shall for ever fail you, if in any one instance you ever have been, or ever shall be, defective in your performance of these conditions? Will you look to this method of salvation to "make the promise *sure?*" Alas! there is no man that ever could, or ever can, stand on such a ground as this.]

But justification being by faith alone, the promise is sure *to all*—

[To all who truly believe in Christ the promise is infallibly sure, whatever be their *nation*, their *character*, their *attainments*, their *circumstances*. The Jew and the Gentile are here perfectly on a level[m]: nothing is conceded on account of circumcision; nothing is withheld on account of uncircumcision: the righteousness of Christ shall be equally on the one or the other the very instant they believe in Christ[n]. Nor will it make any difference whether they have been more or less sinful in times past. The blood of Christ is as sufficient to cleanse one, as another: the very man that nailed our Saviour to the cross, or that pierced his side with the spear, may be as effectually delivered from his guilt, as any other sinner in the universe, provided he really and truly look to the Lord Jesus Christ to save him: for "*all* that believe, are justified from *all* things[o]." Moreover, babes in Christ have the promise as sure to them, as the young men or fathers have. Salvation is not suspended on the *strength* of our faith, but its *reality;* not on *the time that it has been exercised*, but on *the simplicity and sincerity with which it is exercised*. Hence St. John says, "I write unto you, *little children*, because your sins *are* forgiven you for his name's sake[p]." It is not said

[m] Rom. iii. 29.
[n] Rom. iii. 22.
[o] Acts xiii. 39.
[p] 1 John ii. 12.

here, that their sins *shall be* forgiven, when they have attained such an age; but, that they *are* even now already forgiven to them, notwithstanding their infantine weakness and insufficiency. We must go further still, and say, that, though the believer should be in the very article of death, and have no time left him for the performance of good works, yet should the blood of Christ, sprinkled by faith, cleanse him from all sin; and the righteousness of Christ, apprehended and applied by faith, shall justify him perfectly before God. The penitent thief had reviled our Saviour on the cross, no less than the impenitent one: yet, the very instant he cast himself on the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, he was accepted; and our Lord himself said to him, "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." The promise being made to all who believe, it is as sure to the believer, as the power and veracity of God can make it.]

To IMPROVE this subject, we shall,

1. Guard the doctrine from abuse—

[That the doctrine of justification by faith *may be* abused, is certain: for so it was in the days of St. Paul himself[q]. But truth is not therefore to be renounced because it may be perverted; but we must, as Paul himself did, hold fast the truth, and rescue it from those perversions to which it is exposed.

We have stated with all possible plainness, that we are to look for our justification solely by faith, without the smallest dependence on any works of our own. But are we therefore at liberty to neglect good works? or can our final salvation be secured without them, where an opportunity is afforded for the performance of them? Assuredly, *in their place*, good works are as necessary as faith itself: only we must take care not to confound their respective offices. The use of faith is, to apprehend Christ; and the use of good works is, to glorify Christ. In no other way can Christ be apprehended, than by faith; and in no other way can he be glorified, than by good works[r]. Now God has clearly pointed out the way in which his people must walk: and it is only by walking in that way that they can arrive at the mansions prepared for them[s]. It is necessary therefore that we should cultivate all Christian virtues, adding one to another throughout their whole extent: and it is by this course of action that we are to "make our calling and election sure[t]." Here we would particularly remind you, that the very same word which is used in my text by

[q] Rom. vi. 1, 15.
[r] John xv. 18.
[s] Eph. i. 4. and ii. 10.
[t] 2 Pet. i. 10, 11.

St. Paul in reference to faith, is used by St. Peter in reference to works[u]. And how are we to explain this? Are we to set the two Apostles against each other? No: they are easily reconciled: the one is speaking of faith as securing an interest in the promises; and the other is speaking of works as the appointed road in which we are to walk, and which alone will lead us safely to the kingdom of heaven. As, on the one hand, without faith we can never be united unto Christ, or be partakers of his righteousness, so, on the other hand, if it produce not obedience, our faith will be of no more avail than the faith of devils. And this is exactly what St. James tells us[x]; as also does St. Paul in this very epistle, where he says, that "to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, God will give eternal life[y]." If the Apostle therefore did not contradict himself, neither are we to consider the other Apostles as contradicting him, but only as affirming, that *in their place* good works are necessary, no less than faith is *in its place*. Behold then, whilst we maintain with all steadfastness the doctrine of justification by faith, we declare to all that the King's highway is the way of holiness[z], and that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord[a]."]

2. Commend it to your cordial acceptance—

[If you sought for nothing but present comfort, methinks you should without hesitation embrace the doctrine of salvation by faith. For at what comfort can a man ever arrive, who seeks salvation by his works? How can he ever get satisfaction on the subjects on which all his happiness depends? How can he know what is sufficient for his acceptance, and whether he has done what under his circumstances is sufficient? And, if he can never attain the knowledge of these things, in what sad uncertainty must he be held all his days respecting the final salvation of his soul! And is it not a fearful thing to stand on the brink of eternity, and not to know whether we be going to heaven or to hell? The doctrine of justification by faith presents a clear and definite idea to the mind. Doubtless, in the lower stages of the divine life, there may be considerable suspense even there; because a person may not be certain that his faith is so simple and entire as it ought to be: but still he has a definite object in view, namely, to cast himself wholly upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and to rely altogether upon him: and, though he may not have an assured confidence of his acceptance in Christ, he knows, that it is as impossible for a man who flees to Christ to perish, as it is for God to lie:

[u] *βεβαίαν*. [x] Jam. ii. 14—20. [y] Rom. ii. 7.
[z] Isai. xxxv. 8. [a] Heb. xii. 14.

and this conviction is a source of unbounded consolation to his soul[b]. In this conviction he has "an anchor for his soul, both sure and steadfast[c];" an anchor which shall enable him to ride out in safety all the storms which either the world or Satan can raise against him.

But present comfort is but a secondary consideration. The question is, What will avail us at the day of judgment? What will secure to us the promise *then?* God has told us, that he has appointed salvation to be by faith *for this very end.* Will God then, who has declared, that, if we believe not on his Son we are condemned already, and that his wrath abideth on us; will he, I say, reverse his sentence in favour of those who have proudly rejected the salvation which he offered them? This cannot be. Let me therefore entreat all to renounce all dependence on their own works, as Paul did on his[d]; and to seek salvation in that adorable Emmanuel, of whom it is said, "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and in him shall they glory[e]."]

[b] Heb. vi. 17—19.
[c] Here is the same word, βεβαίαν.
[d] Phil. iii. 9.
[e] Isai. xlv. 25.

MDCCCXXXIX.

ABRAHAM'S FAITH.

Rom. iv. 20—25. *He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.*

THERE is no Christian grace, the want of which is so much condemned in Scripture, or the exercise of which is so much applauded, as faith. In the Epistle to the Hebrews there is one whole chapter occupied in celebrating the saints that were distinguished for this grace. Amongst these Abraham makes a very conspicuous figure. In the chapter before us also the Apostle mentions this eminent trait in Abraham's character, and expatiates upon it in support of that, which it is the one scope of this

whole epistle to establish, namely, the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

In opening the Apostle's words, we shall consider,

I. The faith of Abraham—

This faith was most extraordinary—

[It had respect to two things, which God had promised him, namely, *The birth of a son by Sarah, whose progeny should be numerous as the stars of heaven*[a]; and *the gift of one particular seed, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed*[b]. Incredible as these events appeared, he staggered not at God's promises relating to them; but was fully persuaded that they should be fulfilled in their season.

Considering his age and Sarah's, he being one hundred years old, and she ninety, there was no hope, according to the course of nature, that a child should be born unto them. But natural impediments were of no account with him: he knew that, whatever God should promise, he was able also to perform: and therefore, whilst "Sarah laughed" at the tidings in a way of unbelieving derision, Abraham laughed at them in a way of believing exultation[c].

The gift of a Saviour too to descend from his loins, a Saviour in whom both his own soul, and the souls of all his believing posterity, should be blessed, he fully believed. Our blessed Lord himself assures us, that, at the distance of two thousand years, "Abraham saw *his* day, and was glad[d]." Abraham knew himself to be a sinner before God, and consequently that he needed a better righteousness than his own to procure him acceptance with God in the last day: and he believed that this promised Seed should work out a righteousness for him, a righteousness commensurate with his necessities, yea, and with the necessities of the whole world. "This Gospel was preached to Abraham" in the promise before us[e], and on this he founded all his hopes, and placed the most unshaken affiance.]

By this he was justified before God—

["This faith of his," my text informs us, "was imputed to him for righteousness." But what are we to understand by this? Was the mere *act* of faith made his justifying righteousness? No, assuredly not: for if it were so, "he had whereof to glory;" which the Apostle assures us he had not[f]. Faith, *as an act*, is a work of our own, just as love, or any other grace is: and if he was justified by it *in that view*, he was justified

[a] Gen. xv. 4—6. [b] Gen. xii. 2, 3. and xxii. 17, 18.
[c] Compare Gen. xvii. 17. with xviii. 12. [d] John viii. 56.
[e] Gal. iii. 8. [f] ver. 2.

by works, which no child of man ever was, or ever can be. No; it was *instrumentally, as apprehending Christ*, that faith justified him. In Christ alone his justifying righteousness was found: and it was by faith that he laid hold on this righteousness, and applied it to himself for the salvation of his soul. *That* is the righteousness which God has appointed to be received through faith in Christ, and which he has declared, "is unto all, and upon all, them that believe[g]."

Now the Apostle marks this point with peculiar jealousy and precision. It might be supposed that, because Abraham, in token of his believing the promise made to him, obeyed the command given him relative to circumcision, his obedience was meritorious, and was, in part at least, a ground of his justification before God. But the faith by which he was justified existed many years before he was circumcised; and his circumcision was "*a seal of that righteousness which he had long before possessed in his uncircumcised state:*" and consequently, it was *his faith only*, and *not any subsequent obedience*, that justified him[h]. The moment he believed in Christ as the promised seed, that moment the righteousness of Christ was imputed to him, and he was justified by it in the sight of God.]

Having distinctly marked the faith of Abraham, I proceed to state,

II. The instruction to be derived from it—

Though God was pleased to honour his servant Abraham by transmitting to posterity an account of his faith, yet this was not the only, or the principal, reason that induced him to record these things concerning Abraham. His chief intent was,

1. To shew us how we are to seek justification before God—

[Abraham believed in God as able to accomplish all that he had promised: and by this faith he was justified Thus we are to believe in God as having already accomplished his promises, in having given up his Son to "die for our offences," and having raised him from the dead as the author and pledge of our eternal justification. It is by the death of Christ, and through the prevailing intercession, which, in his exalted state, he makes for us, that we are to be reconciled to God — — — We must not for one moment dream of any other way of acceptance — — — If so eminent a man as Abraham was incapable

[g] Rom. iii. 21, 22. [h] ver. 9—11.

of being justified by his works, much more must we: and if he was necessitated to look to Christ in order to obtain salvation, beyond all doubt we must stand indebted to the same Saviour for all our hopes of happiness and glory.]

2. To assure us that, if we truly believe in Christ, we cannot fail of being justified—

[Abraham's views of Christ must assuredly have been very obscure: yet, dark as they were, they availed for his justification before God. But we have an incomparably clearer knowledge of Christ: we see him in his person, work, and offices, and therefore have stronger ground for our faith in him. If we then receive the record of God concerning him, and rely fully upon him as "dying for our offences, and as raised again for our justification," shall not we be accepted? We need not fear. Our souls may appear as dead with respect to spiritual fruitfulness, as Abraham's and Sarah's bodies were with respect to their having a son and heir; and to the eye of sense it may appear as improbable that *we* should inherit the promise, as that *they* should; but if we believe, we shall soon find that "all things are possible to him that believeth:" we shall have the righteousness of Christ imputed to us; and, being made heirs with Abraham, we shall be enabled to "walk in his steps[i]" on earth, and "sit down with him in the kingdom of our Lord in heaven[k]."]

By way of conclusion, we would entreat you to REFLECT upon,

1. The folly and danger of self-righteousness—

[For what end did the Apostle take such pains to shew us that the most eminent saints of old were not justified by their works, but to caution us the more strongly against trusting in our own works? Let us not imagine this a light matter: on this one point our everlasting happiness depends. If we will renounce all dependence on ourselves, and "submit to Christ's righteousness," we shall be saved: but if we will "go about to establish our own righteousness," either in whole or in part, we must inevitably, and eternally, perish[l].]

2. The value and importance of faith—

[The highest commendation imaginable is given to faith, in the words before us. Two things are spoken of it, which should render it very precious in our eyes; it "gives the highest glory to God," and brings the richest benefit to man. Faith glorifies all the perfections of the Deity, in a far higher

[i] ver. 12. [k] Gal. iii. 6—9. [l] Rom. ix. 30—32. and x. 3.

degree than any other grace whatever: and it saves the soul; which cannot be said of any other grace. Faith is the (instrumental) *cause* of our justification: but all other graces are the fruits and *effects* of justification already imparted to us. Let us seek then to exercise faith, and to be "strong in faith:" and let us be well assured, that the more confidently we rely on the promises of God, the more certainly shall we laugh with holy exultation, and obtain a testimony from God that we were accepted in his sight.]

MDCCCXL.

BENEFITS ARISING FROM A JUSTIFYING FAITH.

Rom. v. 1—5. *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*

IT may excite surprise, that the Apostle should contend so earnestly for the doctrine of justification by faith alone, when on many other subjects he evinces a candour that might almost be construed into indifference. The eating of meats offered to idols; the observance of times and seasons which under the Jewish law were regarded as holy; yea, and even the practice of circumcision itself, if not set in opposition to the Gospel; were left by him to the discretion of men, to be used or neglected as they thought fit. But to receive the doctrine of justification by faith was not left to the option of any; nor was any alternative offered them, but to submit to it, or perish. This however was not without good reason, since it was not possible to substitute any thing in the place of that doctrine, or to interfere with it in any degree, without making void the whole work of redemption. Moreover, by this doctrine such blessings were insured to man as could not be procured by any other means. Some of these the Apostle

enumerates in the passage before us: and we shall consider them in the order in which they lie—

I. A state of favour and acceptance with God—

[Man, as a sinner, is exposed to the wrath of God, and is under a sentence of actual condemnation. But being justified by faith in Christ, he is freed from guilt through the atoning sacrifice which has been offered for him, and is brought into a state of reconciliation with God. From the moment that he believes in Christ, "the anger of God is turned away from him;" and there remains, if we may so speak, no longer any thing upon him, which can call forth the Divine displeasure against him: his sins are all washed away in the Redeemer's blood; and he is clothed from head to foot in the robe of the Redeemer's righteousness, so that in the sight of God he stands without spot or blemish[a]. Having thus perfect reconciliation with God, he has peace in his own conscience, even that "peace of God which passeth all understanding."

Into this state "he has access by faith in Christ;" and in it "he stands," having this peace as an abiding portion. It is the very portion which Christ himself promised to all his faithful followers; "In me ye shall have peace:" "My peace I give unto you." And hence the Lord Jesus bears, as his own peculiar title, that glorious name, "The Prince of Peace[b]."]

Next, in succession to this blessing, is,

II. A joyful hope of his glory—

[The believer, being made a child of God, is become "an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ[c]:" and he immediately begins to look forward to that inheritance to which he has been begotten, which is "incorruptible, and undefiled, and never-fading; and is reserved in heaven for them, as they are reserved by the power of God for it[d]." To this inheritance our blessed Lord encouraged his Disciples to have respect continually, and to anticipate in their minds the everlasting fruition of it: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And, if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also[e]." And accordingly we find the Apostle Paul sweetly assured of the possession of it, as soon as he should be liberated from this earthly tabernacle[f]; and teaching all to expect the same portion at the period of their dismission from the body[g].

[a] Eph. v. 27. Jude, ver. 24.
[b] Isai. ix. 6.
[c] Rom. viii. 17.
[d] 1 Pet. i. 4, 5.
[e] John xiv. 2, 3.
[f] 2 Cor. v. 1. Phil. i. 21, 23.
[g] 2 Tim. iv. 8.

Well may the believer rejoice in such a hope: for, what are earthly crowns and kingdoms in comparison of those to which he is heir[h]?]

Whilst the believer receives such great benefits from Christ, he experiences,

III. A delight even in tribulations for his sake—

[Tribulations must of necessity in themselves be painful: but as endured for Christ, they become a source and occasion of joy. The believer knows beforehand that he shall be called to suffer them[i]; and he is prepared to glory in them, as the Apostles did, who, when they had been imprisoned and scourged for their fidelity to Christ, went forth from their persecutors, "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his sake[k]." They know that their sufferings will be productive of present, no less than of eternal, benefit to their souls; that, though in the first instance tribulation may cause impatience, it will ultimately "work patience," by bringing him to a meek submission to the Divine will: from patience so increased, he will derive "experience," or a decisive evidence that God is with him, and that the grace of God has wrought effectually on his soul. By that experience his "hope" will be exceedingly confirmed; for he will see the very justice, as well as the truth, of God pledged to recompense what is so endured for his name's sake[l]: and this "hope will never make him ashamed," as theirs will, who look for salvation in any other way than through faith in Christ. Thus he will see that "his light and momentary afflictions are in reality working for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory[m]:" and in this view of them he will greatly rejoice; even as Paul did, who took pleasure in his multiplied distresses[n], and counted even the most cruel death for the sake of Christ and his Church as a subject of the most heartfelt congratulation[o]. Instead of repining at his trials, he receives them as a most invaluable gift of God to him for Christ's sake[p], and glorifies God for them as a most precious testimony of his love[q]. His enemies indeed "think not so, neither do they mean so:" nothing is further from their hearts than to advance the work of godliness in the souls of those whom they persecute, and to augment their joy: but this is the real effect of persecution, which, like fire, purifies them from their dross, and causes its victims to leap for joy[r].]

[h] Rev. iii. 21. [i] 1 Thess. iii. 4. [k] Acts v. 41.
[l] 2 Thess. i. 6, 7. [m] 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. [n] 2 Cor. xii. 10.
[o] Phil. ii. 17, 18. [p] Phil. i. 29. [q] 1 Pet. iv. 12—16
[r] Luke vi. 23. σκιρτήσατε.

To this elevated state of mind the believer in advanced by,

IV. A sense of his love shed abroad in the heart[a]—

[This is a blessing which, though not to be appreciated or understood by those who have never received it, is yet most assuredly enjoyed by many of God's chosen people. We scarcely know how to describe it, because it consists chiefly in an impression on the mind occasioned by manifestations of God's love to the soul. Nothing is more certain than that Christ will "manifest himself to his people, as he does not unto the world." This he will do by the agency of the Holy Ghost, who will "take of the things that are Christ's, and will shew them unto us." As "a *spirit of adoption*" too, he will give us views of the Father, as our Father in Christ Jesus: he will also "*witness* with our spirits that we are Christ's;" and will be in us as "an *earnest* of our everlasting inheritance;" and will "*seal* us unto the day of redemption." By all these operations on our souls, he will "fill us with joy and peace in believing," yea, with "a joy unspeakable and glorified." This is in reality a foretaste of heaven itself; and, where this is, a man, if he had a thousand lives, would be ready to lay them all down for his Lord and Saviour, accounting nothing dear to him, so that "Christ might but be magnified in him, whether by life or death." How persons have been transported with these manifestations, and been enabled by them to triumph over their most malignant enemies, ecclesiastical history, yea the history of our own martyrs, sufficiently informs us. This sense of the Divine presence and love is not indeed at all times equally powerful on the soul: but it is the privilege of all who

[a] This, as it is usually interpreted, is made to sanction the idea, that a sense of God's love in the soul is of itself a sufficient ground for an assurance, that our hope is truly scriptural, and shall never be disappointed. But such an idea would lead to the most fatal delusions. A most able and judicious commentator (Mr. Scott), aware of this danger, endeavours to remove it, by including in "the love of God shed abroad in the heart," all the fruits resulting from it. But an easier, and, in the Author's judgment, a better way to get rid of the difficulty, is, to connect this clause of the text with those words in ver. 3, "We glory in tribulations also;" the intermediate parts being taken parenthetically. Then the proper sense of these words may be given to them without any danger, and a beautiful light be thrown on the whole passage: for though the love of God in the heart is not *of itself* a sufficient evidence of the soundness of our hope, it is, beyond every thing in the world, an incentive to despise, or rather to glory in, sufferings for the Lord's sake. We would read it thus: "We glory in tribulations also; (knowing, &c. &c.;) because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, &c."

flee unto the Saviour as their only refuge, and rely upon him as their only hope.]

We would EXHORT you then, beloved,

1. To hold fast the doctrine of justification by faith only—

[No other doctrine brings such blessings along with it. Hence, they who impugn this doctrine, pour contempt on all these effects of it, as fancies that have no reality, and as the creatures of a heated imagination. But we must discard the Scriptures themselves, if we discard these things from the experience of God's people: and therefore let none deprive you of your hope. Believe in Christ: make *him* "all your salvation, and all your desire." Dismiss with abhorrence every thought that tends to lower him in your estimation, or to rob him of his glory; and to the latest hour of your lives "live altogether by faith in Him, who has loved you, and given himself for you."]

2. To seek the privileges connected with it—

[If any enjoy them not, the fault is utterly their own. Circumstances may interfere to put a difference between one and another, so that persons, equally pious, may not be equally full of peace and joy: and the same persons may sometimes experience a diversity of frames. But, generally speaking, these blessed exercises of mind will be found in men in proportion to the simplicity of their faith, and the entireness of their devotion to God. All the persons in the blessed Trinity are engaged to make you thus blessed. The Father lays his anger by, and speaks peace to your souls. The Lord Jesus Christ, as your Advocate with the Father, secures these blessings for you, and, as your living Head, imparts them to you. And the Holy Ghost communicates to you all those exquisite delights, which the sense of God's love, and a prospect of his glory, are calculated to inspire. Seek then the peace that passeth all understanding; and the joyful "hope that purifieth the heart:" and seek such an abiding sense of God's presence, as shall raise you above all the things of time and sense, and convert tribulation itself into a source of joy and a ground of glorying. Then will you adorn this doctrine of God our Saviour; and will put to shame the enemies of the Gospel, by the transcendent efficacy of it upon your souls.]

MDCCCXLI.

THE BELIEVER'S SECURITY IN CHRIST.

Rom. v. 6—10. *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

IT is pleasing to see with what delight the Apostle Paul dwells upon the transcendent excellency and unbounded love of our Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever he is insisting on, he is sure to introduce the Saviour's name; and, when once he has introduced it, he scarcely knows when to leave the heart-reviving topic: and, if he have left it for a moment, he is ever eager to recur to it again. Hence the connexion of his sentences is frequently remote; as we apprehend it to be in the instance before us. We conceive that the proper connexion of our text is with the two first verses of the chapter; in which the Apostle has spoken of Christ as the true and only source of our acceptance with God, and of that hope of the glory of God, which animates our souls. Then, after expatiating on the further benefits which we receive through him, he comes to state more explicitly, How it was that Christ procured these blessings for us; and, Why we may be assured of the ultimate possession of them. In this view of the text we shall be led to shew,

I. What Christ has done for us, as enemies—

Our state by nature is here but too justly described—

[We are "ungodly," we are "sinners," "enemies" to God and to all vital religion: at the same time, we are also "without strength," altogether impotent to that which is good — — —

What a description is this! how humiliating! and yet how just! — — —]

Yet, when we were in this state, did the Lord Jesus Christ undertake our cause—

[He assumed our nature, and in that nature died. Nor was it merely *for our benefit* that he died, but *in our place and stead.* "He bare our sins in his own body on the tree," and suffered, "he, the Just, for us the unjust[a]." We were exposed to the wrath of God; and that wrath he bore for us: "He became *a curse* for us[b]." The cup which we must have been drinking to all eternity, he drank to the very dregs — — —]

What a stupendous exercise of love was this!

[Well may it be said, that God, in this act of mercy, "*commendeth* his love towards us:" for it is indeed such a display of love as finds no parallel in the whole universe. There could scarcely be found on earth, one person, who would consent to die in the place of another, who was confessedly "a righteous man," and just in all his dealings: though possibly there might be some who would lay down their lives for "a good man[c]," who was eminently pious and useful in the world[d]. But who ever made such a sacrifice for his enemy? The utmost stretch of human affection is, "to lay down one's life for *a friend*[e]." But such was not the love of Christ: "while we were yet *sinners* and *enemies*, He died for us[f]." Truly this was "a love that passeth knowledge;" a love, the heights and depths whereof can never be explored[g] — — —]

From this love of Christ to his enemies the Apostle takes occasion to declare,

II. What we may expect from him, as friends—

Nothing can be plainer or more conclusive than the Apostle's argument, that, 'if Christ has already done

[a] 1 Pet. ii. 24. and iii. 18. This may be illustrated by the substitution of the ram in the place of Isaac. Gen. xxii. 13.

[b] Gal. iii. 13.

[c] For this import of the term ἀγαθὸς, see Mark x. 18.

[d] See Rom. xvi. 4. [e] John xv. 13.

[f] How different was this from all that ever occurred on earth, either before or since! If one man has ever died for another, it has been from the consideration of his being either *peculiarly excellent in himself*, or *a great benefactor to others*, or from a very *high degree of friendship* for him: but when Christ died for us, we, so far from having any thing to recommend us to him, were ungodly in ourselves, and enemies to him.

[g] Eph. iii. 18, 19.

so much for us under circumstances so unfavourable, *much more* shall, whatever remains to be done for us, now that we are in a state of friendship with him, assuredly be completed in due season.'

To elucidate the force of this argument, we would call your attention to the following positions. If Christ should now abandon the work in which he has proceeded so far, and should leave his people to perish at last,

1. He would defeat all his Father's counsels—

[The Father from all eternity predestinated unto life a number of the human race, who therefore are called, "A remnant according to the election of grace[h]:" and these he *gave* unto his Son[i], that he might redeem them by his blood, and have them as "his portion for ever and ever[k]." These in due time he calls by his word and Spirit; he adopts them into his family, transforms them into his image, and will finally exalt them to a participation of his glory[l]. That this counsel may be carried into effect, he commits them to his Son, that they may be kept by his power and grace, and "be preserved blameless unto his heavenly kingdom." But if Christ should relinquish his care of them, and leave them ultimately to die in their sins, all these counsels would be defeated; and with respect to those who were so deserted, it would be said, "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified," them he *left to perish*[m]. But shall God's purposes be so frustrated? Shall this golden chain, which reaches from eternity to eternity, be so broken? No: "Of those whom his Father gave him, he never did lose any, nor ever will[n]." We say not that he will save them *in* their sins: God forbid, that such a blasphemous idea should enter into the mind of any: but *from* their sins he will save them[o]; and "through sanctification of the Spirit[p]," "he will keep them from falling, and present them faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy[q]."]

2. He would render void all that he himself had done—

[He has given up his own life a ransom for us, and has actually reconciled us to God by his own obedience unto death. Can we conceive, that, after he has done all this, he

[h] Eph. i. 4, 5, 11. 2 Thess. ii. 13. Rom. ii. 5.
[i] John xvii. 2, 6, 9, 11, 24. [k] Isai. liii. 10.
[l] See the 17th Article. [m] Rom. viii. 28—30. [n] John xvii. 12.
[o] Matt. i. 21. [p] 1 Pet. i. 2. [q] Jude, ver. 24.

should become indifferent to those whom he has thus redeemed? Will he be satisfied thus to shed his blood in vain? If he has "bought us with a price," will he be content to lose what he has so dearly purchased? After he has actually "justified us by his blood," will he leave us to be condemned? Will he, now that nothing is wanting on his part, but to supply us with his grace, and to uphold us in his arms, will he, I say, relax his care of us, and leave us to perish? Having done the greater for us, when enemies, will he forbear to do the less for us, as friends? Having done the greater unsolicited, will he refuse to do the less when entreated night and day? In the days of his flesh, notwithstanding all the obstacles in his way, he ceased not to go forward till he could say, "It is finished." And will he now leave his work unfinished? Having been "the Author of faith" to us, will he decline to be "the Finisher[r]?" Justly does David argue, like the Apostle in our text: "Thou hast delivered my soul from death; wilt not thou then deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living[s]?" In like manner, we also may be "confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in us, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ[t]." Our great "Zerubbabel hath laid the foundation of his house; and his hands will finish it[u]."]

3. He would forget all the ends of his own exaltation—

[He is "exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour[x]," and to "put under his feet all his own, and his people's enemies[y]:" and do we suppose that he will neglect this work? After "having spoiled principalities and powers, and triumphed over them openly upon the cross[z]," will he, now that he is invested "with all power in heaven and on earth" on purpose to complete his triumphs, give up the palm of victory, and suffer Satan to rescue from his hands those, whom with such stupendous efforts he has delivered? It is not as a private person that Jesus has ascended, but as the "Forerunner[a]" of his people[a]. Will he then forget those whom he has left behind? Will the Head be unmindful of his members[b]? And shall the first-fruits be waved, and no harvest follow[c]? "Living, as he does, on purpose to make intercession for us," will he forget to intercede[d]? and having all fulness treasured up in him for his Church[e], will he forget to impart of it to those for whom

[r] Heb. xii. 2. [s] Ps. lvi. 13. [t] Phil. i. 6.
[u] Zech. iv. 9. [x] Acts v. 31. [y] 1 Cor. xv. 25.
[z] Col. ii. 15. [a] Heb. vi. 20. [b] Eph. v. 30.
[c] 1 Cor. xv. 20. with Lev. xxiii. 10, 11. [d] Heb. vii. 25.
[e] Col. i. 19.

he has expressly received it[f]? As our High Priest, he must not only enter with his own blood within the vail, and there make continual intercession for us, but must come forth to bless his people[g]: and, having fulfilled his office thus far, will he now abandon it? The Apostle had certainly no such apprehension, when he laid so great a stress on the resurrection of our Lord, as to make it more efficacious for the salvation of men, that even the whole of Christ's obedience unto death[h]. We may be sure, therefore, that as he, in his risen state, "is *able* to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him," so he *will* do it, and "will bring Satan himself shortly under their feet[i]."]

4. He would falsify all his own great and precious promises—

[How express is that promise which he has made to all his sheep, that "none shall ever pluck them out of his hands[k]!" Will he be unmindful of this? or is he become so weak that he is not able to fulfil it? He said to his Disciples, "Ye have not chosen me; but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that *your fruit should remain*[l]:" but how can this be true, if he suffer them to become barren, and to be cut down at last as cumberers of the ground? Why did he say, "Believe in God: believe also in me," if he meant, after all, to disappoint our confidence? Can we conceive, that, after comforting his Disciples with the assurance, that he was "going to prepare mansions in his Father's house for them, and would come again and receive them to himself[m];" can we conceive, I say, that he should leave them to take up their abode in the regions of everlasting darkness and despair? No: he is "the Amen, the true and faithful Witness;" and "every promise that is made to us in him, is yea and Amen," as immutable as God himself[n].]

ADDRESS—

1. Those who are inquiring after the way of salvation—

[Nothing can be more plain than the way of salvation, as it is marked out in our text. How must we "be reconciled to God? Through the death of his Son." How must we be justified and saved from wrath? We must "be justified by his blood," and "saved from wrath through him." How, after having been reconciled to God by the death of Christ,

[f] Ps. lxviii. 18. [g] Deut. x. 8. [h] Rom. viii. 34.
[i] Rom. xvi. 20. [k] John x. 27—30. [l] John xv. 16.
[m] John xiv. 2, 3. [n] 2 Cor. i. 20.

must we finally attain complete salvation? We must be "saved by his life;" that is, we must from first to last live by faith on the Son of God, looking to his death as the meritorious ground of our acceptance, and to his renewed life in heaven as the one source of all our stability, and the surest pledge of our eternal happiness. But, it may be asked, Am I among the number for whom these blessings were purchased? If you are among the number of those who feel themselves "ungodly and sinners, and enemies to God, and without strength," then are you the persons for whom Christ died, and for whom he is improving every moment of his renewed life. What, I would ask, can be more plain than this? What room is here left for doubt? Verily, if salvation be not altogether by Christ Jesus, that is, by the efficacy of his death, and the operation of his grace, St. Paul must have been the most incautious and erroneous writer that ever lived. But, if he was neither ignorant nor deceitful, then is the way of salvation so plain, that not any poor "way-faring man, even though he be a fool, can err therein." We charge you then, brethren, to flee for refuge to the hope that is set before you; and to "determine to know nothing as a ground of hope, but Jesus Christ and him crucified."]

2. Those who, having sought for reconciliation through Christ, are afraid of being cast off, and left to perish—

[What is it that fills you with such fears as these? Is it on account of Christ that you are distressed? or on account of your own weakness and unworthiness? If you are afraid of Christ, what is it in Him that you stand in doubt of; his power, or his willingness to save? Surely there can be no doubt on either of these points. If your fears arise from a view of your own weakness and sinfulness, why should *that* prove a bar to your acceptance with him, which was, I had almost said, a reason for his dying for you, and which constantly calls forth his compassion towards you? True, if you continue ungodly, you have no hope: for "the unrighteous cannot inherit the kingdom of God." But, if you desire truly to be delivered from all your corruptions, and to receive constant supplies of grace from him, then you may safely trust in him to carry on and perfect the work he has begun. He that first *sought you*, will not be *sought by you* in vain. He that bore your sins in his own body, will carry them all away into the land of oblivion. He that reconciled you to God, will maintain your peace with God: and he that has completed every thing as far as it depended on his death, will *much more* perfect what depends upon his life. Be strong then, and of good courage; and hold fast your confidence, and the rejoicing of your hope, firm unto the end.]

MDCCCXLII.

HAPPINESS OF THE MORE-ADVANCED BELIEVER.

Rom. v. 11. *And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.*

THOSE remarkable words of the prophet, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," are usually interpreted in reference to the future world: but St. Paul speaks of them as fulfilled to us under the Christian dispensation: for, having cited them, he adds, "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit[a]." So great are the privileges and blessings which we enjoy under the Christian covenant, that no words can adequately express them, no imagination can fully conceive them. We may say respecting them, what God said to Ezekiel respecting the abominations practised by Israel in the chambers of imagery, that the oftener we search into them, the more and greater we shall find[b]. Truly, "the riches of Christ are unsearchable[c]." This is strongly intimated by St. Paul in the passage before us. He had expatiated on the blessings which we enjoy in, and by, Christ: "We have peace with God" by him; and through him are enabled to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Nay more, we are enabled to "glory in tribulations also," as the appointed means of perfecting the Divine work within us, and of fitting us for the glory which God has taught us to expect[d]. But neither is this all: for God would have us rise above the mere consideration of our own happiness, even though it consist in a possession of all the glory of heaven; and he would have our minds occupied with the contemplation of his infinite perfections, and "filled with all the fulness" of his communicable felicity[e]. Hence the Apostle, declaring this to be the actual experience

[a] Isai. lxiv. 4. with 1 Cor. ii 9, 10. [b] Ezek. viii. 3—16.
[c] Eph. iii. 8. [d] ver. 1—3. [e] Eph. iii. 19.

of the great body of the Church at Rome, says, "And not only so," (that is, we not only enjoy the fore-mentioned blessings,) "but we also joy in God himself through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."

In discoursing on these words, we shall be led to shew,

I. The happy state of believers in general—

The believer has now already received reconciliation with God—

[The word translated "The atonement" is the same with that which twice in the preceding verse is translated "Reconciled:" and *that* is its true import here. Reconciliation has been purchased for men by Christ's obedience unto death: and it is freely offered to them in the name of Christ, by those who go forth as his ambassadors to a guilty world: and it is accepted by those who believe their testimony, and embrace the proffered salvation. It is on this account that the Gospel is called, "The ministry of reconciliation[f]." Those who receive the glad tidings have all their iniquities blotted out from the book of God's remembrance. He is no more angry with them, as he was in their unbelieving state; but looks upon them as dear children, in whose happiness he will be eternally glorified. They are now privileged to regard him no longer as an angry Judge, but as a loving Father. Their state is precisely that of the Prodigal Son, after he had returned to his Father's house: they are freely forgiven for Christ's sake; nor shall so much as one upbraiding word be ever uttered against them. Their Father rejoices over them as restored to his favour, and delights to honour them with all suitable expressions of paternal love. Are not these persons truly blessed[g]?]

This is the state of every believer without exception—

[If a man have lived in sin for ever so many years, and have at last been led, with deep penitence and contrition, to the foot of the cross, this mercy is instantly vouchsafed to him. The long-continuance of his former iniquities is no bar to his acceptance. The very first moment that he comes weary and heavy-laden to Christ, he finds rest unto his soul.

Neither does the enormity of a man's transgressions make any difference in this respect. He may have been as vile as ever David was; and yet, on coming truly to Christ, his iniquities

[f] Deut. xxxiii. 26—29. [g] 2 Cor. v. 18—20.

shall all be pardoned, and it shall be said to him, "The Lord hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." "Though his sins may have been as crimson, they shall instantly become as white as snow[h]." The healing virtue of the brazen serpent was not felt by those only whose wounds were of a less dangerous nature, but by those who were at the very point of death: and so shall a sight of our crucified Redeemer operate, however long the wounds of sin have been inflicted, or to whatever extent they may have brought death upon the soul.

We may add also, for the encouragement of the young, that, however weakly their infantine minds have embraced the truth, yet, if they be really sensible of their lost estate, and truly look to the Lord Jesus Christ as their only hope, he will "take them up in his arms and bless them," and will "ordain praise for himself even in the mouth of babes and sucklings."]

But the more immediate object of our text is, to set before us,

II. The yet happier state of the more advanced believer—

Every believer without exception receives reconciliation with God: but the advanced believer is yet more highly privileged. He has this blessing in common with others; but "*not only so.*" No: he rises higher; he soars even to God himself; and "rejoices" and "glories in" God[i],

1. As a God of all grace—

[The more we are advanced in the divine life, the more deeply do we feel our own emptiness and utter helplessness. This, we might suppose, would rather weaken and interrupt his joy: and so it would, if his views of God were not also proportionably enlarged. But he views God as "a God of all grace[k];" and whatever grace he more particularly needs, he sees a fulness of it treasured up in his reconciled God for the supply of his necessities. Does he desire peace? God is to him "the God of peace[l]." Would he abound in hope? God is to him "the God of hope[m]." Would he have an increase of patience and of consolation to support him under his diversified afflictions? God is to him "a God of patience and consolation[n]." In short, whatever he want, God is a God of it to him, not only as having an inexhaustible fulness of it in himself, but, as, if we may so speak, made up of it, as if it were his one only perfection. What a joyful thought is this

[h] Isai. i. 18.
[i] It is the same word as is used in ver. 3.
[k] 1 Pet. v. 10.
[l] Heb. xiii. 20.
[m] Rom. xv. 13.
[n] Rom. xv. 5.

to the believer who is accustomed to seek his all in God, and to "live altogether by faith in the Son of God, who loved him, and gave himself for him!"]

2. As his covenant God and Father—

[God, in the new covenant which he has made with us, has stated this as an inseparable provision of that covenant, that he will be "*the* God *of* his people," and "*a* God *to* them[o]." Whatever he *is*, he will be for them: whatever he *has*, he will, as far as they are capable of receiving it, impart unto them. He will not merely be a Friend, or a Father, to them: no; he will be *a God:* and all that a God can *be to* them, or can *do for* them, he will *be*, and *do*. All this he pledges to them by covenant, and by oath; "that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for him to lie, *they* might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them[p]." Well then may they who have laid hold on this covenant, rejoice in him. The Jews, on account of their external relation to him, "made their boast of God[q]:" and they had reason so to do. But how much greater reason has the Christian to do so, who has laid hold on that better covenant, which "is ordered in all things and sure," and which shall never wax old, or decay!]

3. As his everlasting portion—

[It is not *here* only that God will be the portion of his people, but for ever *in the eternal world*. Such he was to Abraham; "I am thy shield, and thy eternal great reward[r]." And such he will be to every believer; as it is written, "My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion *for ever*[s]." In that tabernacle that is above, God will dwell in the midst of his people, and be their God, and will wipe away all tears from their eyes[t]. It is his presence that will constitute the felicity of heaven: there will be no sun or moon *there;* for God himself, and the Lamb, will be the light of that world; and all created enjoyment will vanish, like the light of the glow-worm before the meridian sun[u]. Justly in this view of his privileges does David say, and justly may every believer say, "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup: the lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage[x]."]

ADDRESS—

1. Let all avail themselves of the opportunity now afforded them—

[o] Jer. xxxi. 33. with Heb. viii. 8. [p] Heb. vi. 17, 18.
[q] Rom. ii. 17. [r] Gen. xv. 1. [s] Ps. lxxiii. 26.
[t] Rev. xxi. 3, 4. [u] Rev. xxi. 22, 23. [x] Ps. xvi. 5, 6.

[At this hour do "we preach peace to you by Jesus Christ[y];" and "as ambassadors of God, we beseech you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." To all without exception is this invitation given. For every sinner in the universe has Christ "purchased reconciliation through the blood of his cross;" and to every one does he address those memorable words, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth[z]." Will any of you then be content to continue at enmity with God, and to have God an enemy to you? O lay down the weapons of your rebellion, and seek your happiness in God. Surely "in his favour is life; and his loving-kindness is better than life itself." Only begin this day to rejoice in your God; and "there shall be joy amongst the angels in the presence of God on your account."]

2. Let all seek the highest attainments in the divine life—

[There is a holy ambition which all should feel. We should not any of us be content to obtain *reconciliation with* God: we should seek to *rejoice in* God. We should say with David, "I will go unto the altar of God, of God my exceeding joy[a]." It is greatly to be lamented that the generality of Christians live far below their privileges. If only they have peace with God, and can rejoice in hope of his glory, and can glory in tribulations for his sake, they are ready to think, that they are in as good a state as they need to be. But, brethren, whilst we rejoice that ye are *so* far advanced, we would have you "*not only so:*" we would have you "forget what is behind, and press forward towards that which is before." We would have you "covet earnestly the best gifts." It is your privilege "to rejoice in God all the day," yea, to "rejoice in him with joy unspeakable and glorified[b]." Nor is it your privilege only, but your duty also: for it is said, "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory[c]." I call you then to live nigh to God, and to "delight yourselves in God," and to have even now "the earnest" of heaven in your souls[d]. "Let Israel then rejoice in Him that made him; and the children of Zion be joyful in their King[e]."]

[y] Acts x. 36. [z] Isai. xlv. 22. [a] Ps. xliii. 4.
[b] 1 Pet. i. 8. [c] Isai. xlv. 25. [d] Eph. i. 14.
[e] Ps. cxlix. 2.

MDCCCXLIII.

DEATH BY ADAM, AND LIFE BY CHRIST.

Rom. v. 18, 19. *Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*

THE more we investigate the Gospel of Christ, the more mysterious it appears in all its parts. To a superficial observer it seems that the way of salvation through a crucified Redeemer is plain and simple: but it is surely an astonishing mystery, that those who have destroyed themselves should be redeemed by the blood of God's only dear Son, and be saved by a righteousness that was wrought out by him. Yet that is but a small part of the mystery revealed to us in the Gospel. There we learn, that at the instant of our birth we are under a sentence of condemnation for the sin of our first parent; and that, as we are lost in him, so we are to be recovered by the Lord Jesus Christ, inheriting righteousness and life from him, the second Adam, as we inherit sin and death from the first Adam. This is the subject of which the Apostle treats in the passage before us. He had throughout the preceding part of this epistle declared the way of salvation through Christ: but now he traces up sin and death to Adam as our federal head or representative, and righteousness and life to Christ as our federal head or representative under the new covenant. This opens to us a new view of the Gospel, and leads us farther into the great mystery of redemption than the preceding statements had enabled us to penetrate.

That we may avail ourselves of the light which is thus afforded us, we shall,

I. Consider the comparison here instituted—

It is here assumed as an acknowledged truth, that

by the sin of Adam we all were brought under guilt and condemnation—

[Adam was not a mere private individual, but the head and representative of all mankind. Hence what he did in eating the forbidden fruit, is imputed unto us, as though it had been done by us: and we are subjected to the punishment that was denounced against transgression, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." This in the preceding context is repeatedly affirmed: "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned[a]." Again, "Through the offence of one many be dead[b]:" Again, "The judgment was by one to condemnation[c]:" And again, "By one man's offence death reigned by one[d]." So also it is twice mentioned in our text. Nor is it merely asserted: it is *proved* also, and that too by an argument which all can easily understand. The death of infants demonstrates the truth in question: for, nothing is plainer than that God will not inflict punishment, where no guilt attaches: but he does inflict punishment, even death itself, on infants, who cannot possibly have committed sin in their own persons. For whose sin then is this punishment inflicted? Surely for the sin of Adam, our first parent; who was the head and representative of all mankind. The law which denounced death as the penalty of transgression, comprehended, not him only, but us also: and therefore, having transgressed it in him, *we* are considered as sinners, and are subjected to all the penalties of transgression. To account for the agonies and death of new-born infants on any other supposition than this, is impossible.]

With this is compared our justification to life by the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ—

[Christ is that person "by whose obedience many are made righteous." He is given to us as a second Covenant-Head. There is however this difference between him and Adam: Adam was the head of all his *natural* seed; and Christ is the head of all his *spiritual* seed. They are included in him; and all that he did or suffered is put to their account, as though they had done or suffered it themselves: and his entire righteousness is imputed to them for justification, precisely as Adam's disobedience is imputed to us for condemnation. The parallel indeed holds yet farther still: for as Adam's guilt is imputed to us before we commit personal sin, so is Christ's righteousness imputed to us before we perform any personal obedience. Nevertheless, our obedience is not there-

[a] ver. 12. [b] ver. 15. [c] ver. 16. [d] ver. 17.

fore rendered either useless or uncertain; for, as from Adam we receive a corrupt nature, so from Christ we receive a holy and divine nature: and as all our personal disobedience aggravates the guilt and condemnation which we derived from Adam; so our personal obedience, after we have been justified in Christ Jesus, enhances the degrees of glory to which we are entitled at the instant of our justification. Now all this is plainly affirmed in our text: (*Read the text:*) nay, it is, in the verses preceding our text, affirmed, *that we receive more from Christ than ever we lost in Adam:* (Read ver. 15—17.) And this is a striking, and very important, truth. For,

First, *we are placed in a safer state* than that which we lost in Adam. Adam was placed in a state of probation, to stand or fall by his own obedience; and, notwithstanding all his advantages, he fell, and ruined both himself and all his posterity. But we, when justified in Christ's righteousness, are given to him, that we may be kept by his power unto everlasting salvation: and he has expressly declared, that "none shall ever pluck us out of his hands."

Next, *we are made to possess a better righteousness* than any which we could ever have inherited from Adam: for if he had stood, and we had stood in him, and partaken of his righteousness for ever, we should still have had only the righteousness of *a creature:* but now we have, and shall have to all eternity, the righteousness of *the Creator:* yes, "Jehovah himself is our righteousness:" and whereas, with a creature's righteousness, we could have claimed nothing, being only unprofitable servants, with the Creator's righteousness we may claim *on the footing of justice* as well as of mercy, all the glory of heaven.

Once more: *Our happiness is infinitely enhanced* beyond any thing it could ever have been, if we had stood in Adam. The felicity of heaven would doubtless have been inconceivably great under *any* circumstances: but who can conceive what an addition it will receive from the consideration of its being the purchase of the Redeemer's blood, and the fruit of those eternal counsels by which the whole work of redemption was both planned and executed?

Thus then is the comparison between the first and second Adam shewn to be strictly just; except indeed that the scale preponderates beyond all expression or conception in favour of the Lord Jesus, who has done "MUCH MORE" for us than ever we lost in Adam; or than Adam, though he had continued sinless, ever could have done, either for himself or us.]

But that this subject may produce a suitable impression on our minds, we will,

II. Suggest one or two reflections upon it—

It is much to be regretted, that the great mysteries of religion are but too often made the subjects of mere speculation. But every doctrine of Christianity should be practically improved, and especially a doctrine of such vital importance as that before us.

From the doctrine of our fall in Adam and our recovery in Christ, we cannot but OBSERVE,

1. How deep and unsearchable are the ways of God!

[That ever our first parent should be constituted a federal head to his posterity, so that they should stand or fall in him, is in itself a stupendous mystery. And it may appear to have been an arbitrary appointment, injurious to the whole race of mankind. But we do not hesitate to say, that if the whole race of mankind had been created at once in precisely the same state and circumstances as Adam was, they would have been as willing to stand or fall in Adam, as to have their lot depend upon themselves; because they would have felt, that, whilst he possessed every advantage that they did, he had a strong inducement to steadfastness which they could not have felt, namely, the dependence of all his posterity upon his fidelity to God: and consequently, that their happiness would be more secure in his hands than in their own. But if it could now be put to every human being to determine for himself this point; if the question were asked of every individual, Whether do you think it better that your happiness should depend on Adam, formed as he was in the full possession of all his faculties; subjected to one only temptation, and that in fact so small a temptation as scarcely to deserve the name; perfect in himself, and his only companion being perfect also, and no such thing as sin existing in the whole creation; whether would you prefer, I say, to depend on him, or on yourself, born into a world that lieth in wickedness, surrounded with temptations innumerable, and having all your faculties only in a state of infantine weakness, so as to be scarcely capable of exercising with propriety either judgment or volition: Would any one doubt a moment? Would not every person to whom such an option was given, account it an unspeakable mercy to have such a representative as Adam was, and to have his happiness depend on *him*, rather than on his own feeble capacity and power? There can be no doubt on this subject: for if Adam, in his more favourable circumstances, fell, much more should we in circumstances where it was scarcely possible to stand. Still however, though we acknowledge it to be a gracious and merciful appointment, we must nevertheless regard it as a stupendous mystery.

But what shall we say of the appointment of the Lord Jesus Christ to be a second Covenant-Head, to deliver us by his obedience from the fatal effects of Adam's disobedience? Here we are perfectly lost in wonder and amazement. For consider, Who Jesus was? He was the co-equal, co-eternal Son of God — — — Consider, What he undertook to do? He undertook to suffer in our place and stead all that was due to us, and to confer on us his righteousness with all the glory that was due to him — — — Consider farther, On what terms he confers this blessing upon us? He requires only, that we believe in him: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" — — — Consider yet farther, What provision he has made for the final happiness of those who thus believe in him? He does not restore them to the *state of trial* in which Adam was originally placed, but to a state of *comparative security*, inasmuch as he himself undertakes to "perfect that which concerneth them," and to be "the Finisher of faith" to those in whom he has been "the Author of it[e]." What an inscrutable mystery is here! that *such a person* should be given; and *such a righteousness* be wrought out by him! that an interest in this righteousness should be conferred on *such easy terms!* and lastly, that such security should be provided for all his believing people! Well might the Apostle say, "Great is the mystery of godliness[f]:" and well may all the angels in heaven occupy themselves, as they do continually, in searching into it with the profoundest adoration[f]. Let us then contemplate these wonders with holy awe. Let us not make them a theme for disputation, but a subject of incessant admiration, gratitude, and praise[g].]

2. How obvious and urgent is the duty of man!

[Here we are in the situation of fellow-creatures, wholly incapable of saving ourselves, and shut up to the way of salvation provided for us in the Gospel. God does not consult us, or ask our approbation of his plans. He calls us, not to give our opinion, but to accept his proffered mercy. To dispute, or sit in judgment on his dispensations, is vain. We are like shipwrecked persons, ready to perish in the great deep. When the ship is just on the point of sinking, it is no time to complain, that our lives, by the laws of navigation, were made to

[e] Heb. xii. 2. [f] 1 Tim. iii. 16.

[g] With respect to children, we believe that, as they die in Adam, before they have incurred any *personal* guilt, so they will be saved in Christ, though they have not *personally* believed in him, or obeyed his commandments. And we think that this is strongly implied in ver. 15—17. But it is not necessary to enter into that part of the subject.

depend on the skill of the captain; or that the management of the vessel had not been committed to ourselves; or that God, when he formed the world, placed a rock in that particular situation, notwithstanding he foresaw, from all eternity, that our ship would be wrecked upon it: all such thoughts at that time would be vain: our only consideration under such circumstances should be, how shall I be saved from perishing? And if we saw a ship hastening towards us for our preservation, we should be wholly occupied in contriving how we might secure the proffered aid. This, I say, is precisely our case: we are lost in Adam: but that God, who foresaw that we should be wrecked in him, provided his only dear Son to be a Saviour to us; and has sent him to save all who feel their need of mercy, and are willing to enter into this ark of God. Behold then, brethren, what your duty is: it is to "flee for refuge to the hope that is set before you." If you feel a rebellious thought arise, why did God make me thus? let it be answered in the way prescribed by the Apostle, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God[h]?" If you were not consulted about your dependence on Adam, were you consulted about the appointment of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the way of recovery by him? No: this was the unsolicited gift of God, who determined thus to glorify himself in blessing and exalting you. Embrace then, with all thankfulness, the salvation offered you in the Gospel. Lay hold on Christ: rely upon him: place all your hope in his obedience unto death; seek for justification solely through his blood and righteousness: and expect to receive from him all, yea "exceeding abundantly above all that ye can either ask or think."[i]]

[h] Rom. ix. 20.

[i] The corruption that we derive from Adam, is a totally distinct subject from that treated of in the text; and on that account is left unnoticed here.

MDCCCXLIV.

THE ABUNDANT GRACE OF GOD.

Rom. v. 20, 21. *Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

FROM eternity God determined to glorify his grace: for this end he permitted sin to enter into the world. The publication of his law also promoted

the same end: it served to shew how awfully sin had abounded, and consequently to magnify that grace which destroyed sin. To this effect the Apostle speaks in the text and the words preceding it.

We shall endeavour to shew,

I. How sin has abounded—

The transgression of Adam was of a very malignant nature.

[In the whole preceding context *that* sin in particular is referred to, and it may well be considered as of a crimson dye. It argued a contempt of God's goodness, which had bestowed so much upon him[a]: it argued a doubt of his veracity, which was engaged to inflict the penalty[b]: it argued a rejection of his authority, which forbad the eating of that fruit[c]: It argued an attempt to invade the peculiar prerogatives of God[d]. Surely in this single transgression sin greatly abounded.]

But sin spread also over the whole world—

[Adam begat sons "*in his own* fallen *likeness*." All his descendents inherited his corruption[e], and cast off the yoke which their Maker had imposed upon them: there was not so much as one single exception to be found[f]. On this very account God once destroyed all but one family.]

It had moreover prevailed in every heart to an awful degree—

[Every faculty of men's souls was debased by it. The understanding was blinded, the will made obstinate, the conscience seared: all the "members of their bodies also were made instruments of unrighteousness." There was not an imagination of their thoughts that was not evil[g].]

It even took occasion from the holy law of God to rage the more.

[God gave his law to discover and repress sin: but sin would not endure any restraint: it rose like water against the dam that obstructs its progress[h], and inflamed men both against the law, and against him who gave it. Thus, in using so good a law to so vile a purpose, it displayed its own exceeding sinfulness[i].]

But God did not altogether abandon our wretched world—

[a] Gen. ii. 8, 9. [b] Gen. iii. 4. [c] Gen. ii. 17.
[d] Gen. iii. 5. [e] Job xiv. 4. [f] Ps. xiv. 2, 3.
[g] Gen. vi. 5. [h] Rom. vii. 8. [i] Rom. vii. 13.

II. How grace has much more abounded—

God determined that his grace should be victorious, and that it should establish its throne on the ruins of the empire which sin had erected. For this purpose he gave us his Son to be a second Adam[k]. He laid on him the curse due to our iniquities: he enabled him to "bring in an everlasting righteousness:" he accepted us in him as our new Covenant-Head: he restores us through him to eternal life. Thus the superabundance of his grace is manifest,

1. In the object attained—

[The destruction of man for sin was certainly tremendous: yet was it no more than what was to be expected. The fallen angels had already been banished from heaven. No wonder then if man was made a partaker of their misery. But how beyond all expectation was the recovery of man! How wonderful that he should be restored, whilst a superior order of beings were left to perish; and be exalted to a throne of glory from whence they had been cast down! This was indeed a manifestation of most abundant grace.]

2. In the method of attaining it—

[Sin had reigned unto death by means of Adam, and certainly the destruction of the whole world for one sin argued a dreadful malignity in sin. Yet was there nothing in this unjust or unreasonable[l]. But who could have thought that God should send us *his own Son?* That he should constitute HIM our new Covenant-Head and representative? That he should remove the curse of sin by HIS death? That he should accept sinners through HIS righteousness? That he should remedy by a second Adam what had been brought upon us by the first?

[k] Rom. v. 14. 1 Cor. xv. 22, 45.

[l] If, instead of being represented by Adam, we had all undergone the same probation for ourselves, we have no reason to think that we should not have fallen, like him: if we had possessed exactly the same grace as he, and been subjected to the same temptation, we should have acted as he did. The constituting of him our representative was a great advantage to us, because he had much stronger inducements to fidelity than we could have: we should have been concerned only about ourselves; whereas he had the interests of all his posterity depending on him. Besides, he met his temptation when all his powers were in a state of maturity, and when there was no evil example before him; whereas we should be tempted from our earliest infancy, and with the additional influence of bad examples.

This was a discovery of grace that infinitely transcends the comprehension of men or angels.]

3. In the peculiar advantage with which it was attained—

[If Adam had retained his innocence, we also should have stood in him as our representative. We should however have possessed only a creature's righteousness; but in Christ we possess the righteousness of God himself[m]. Our reward therefore may well be augmented in proportion to the excellence of that, for which we are accepted: besides, the glory of God is infinitely more displayed in Christ, than ever it would have been if Adam had not fallen. Our happiness therefore, in beholding it, must be greatly increased. Thus our restoration through Christ will bring us to the enjoyment of far greater happiness than ever we lost in Adam[n]. What can more fully manifest the superabounding grace of God?]

IMPROVEMENT—

1. For caution—

[This doctrine seems liable to the imputation of licentiousness. St. Paul foresaw the objection, and answered it[o]: his answer should satisfy every objector: but the reign of grace consists in destroying *every* effect of sin; therefore to indulge sin would be to counteract, and not to promote, the grace of God. Let the professors of religion however be careful to give no room for this objection: let them "put to silence the ignorance of foolish men by well-doing."]

2. For encouragement—

[How strange is it that any should despair of mercy! The infinite grace of God has been exhibited in many striking instances[p]. Let us seek to become monuments of this mercy: let us not indeed "sin, that grace may abound;" but let us freely acknowledge how much sin has abounded in us, and yet expect through Christ "abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness."]

[m] 2 Cor. v. 21.
[n] Rom. v. 15. This point is insisted on from ver. 15 to 19
[o] Rom. vi. 1, 2. [p] Luke vii. 47. 1 Tim. i. 14, 16.

MDCCCXLV.

THE GOSPEL SECURES THE PRACTICE OF HOLINESS.

Rom. vi. 1—4. *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

WE are told that "the Gospel was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness;" whilst to all who had an experience of it in their souls, it was both "the power of God, and the wisdom of God[a]." The grounds on which the Jews and Greeks so greatly inveighed against it were various: its *apparent* contrariety to the revelation given by Moses rendered it offensive to the one; and its proposing to us a Saviour, who *appeared* unable to save himself, rendered it contemptible to the other. But there was one ground of offence which exposed it equally to the reprobation of all; and that was, the unfavourable aspect which it had in relation to holiness. Men of every religion were ready to cry out against it in this view: and therefore the Apostle, having stated the plan of the Gospel salvation with all possible clearness, takes up this objection, and gives an answer to it;—such an answer, indeed, as neither Jews nor Gentiles could have anticipated; but such as must approve itself to all whom God enables to comprehend it.

From the words of my text, I will take occasion to shew,

I. The supposed tendency of the Gospel to encourage sin—

The Gospel certainly, when stated as St. Paul stated it, has, to a superficial observer, this aspect—

[a] 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

[It greatly magnifies the grace of God in the salvation of fallen man. It sets forth that grace, in all its freeness, and in all its fulness. It offers salvation freely, "without money and without price." It offers salvation through the righteousness of another, even the righteousness of our incarnate God and Saviour. It offers salvation by faith alone, without works; saying, "To him that *worketh not*, but believeth in him that justifieth *the ungodly*, his faith is counted for righteousness[b]." Nor does it make its offers to the most righteous only; but to all, not excepting even the vilest of mankind; saying, "Where sin hath abounded, grace shall much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, so shall grace reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord[c]."]

Hence men in every age have characterized it as licentious—

[In St. Paul's day, many drew from his statements this inference, that, supposing his statements to be true, men might very safely "continue in sin, that so the grace of God," in pardoning it, "might be the more abundantly displayed." At this day also, wherever the Gospel is faithfully delivered, men bring the same objections against it. Because we offer salvation to the chief of sinners, saying, "All that believe shall be justified from all things[d]," we appear to them to *make light of sin*. And because we declare, that the good works of men make no part of a man's justifying righteousness; and that the best work that ever we performed would, if relied upon in ever so small a degree, not only not add any thing to the work of Christ, but would invalidate and render void all that he ever did and suffered for us; we seem to *make light of holiness;* since we declare, that the evil we have committed shall never condemn, nor shall the good that we may do ever justify, the believing soul. Men cannot imagine what inducement we can have to practise good works, if they are not to justify us; or to abstain from sin, if it may so easily be blotted out by one simple exercise of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence the whole Gospel appears to them a strange, unintelligible, and licentious doctrine; calculated only to mislead the simple, and palatable only to hypocrites and fanatics.]

But, in answer to all such objections, I will shew,

II. The security it gives for the practice of universal holiness—

Doubtless, nothing but divine grace can secure the practice of holiness: and, to a man destitute of that

[b] Rom. iv. 5. [c] Rom. v. 20, 21. [d] Acts xiii. 39.

sanctifying principle, all sentiments, of whatever kind, will be ineffectual for the purification of his soul. A man may profess the greatest regard for good works, yet not perform them; or he may profess the greatest regard for Christ, and not render to him the obedience of the heart: on the contrary, he may "turn the grace of God into lasciviousness[e]." But, so far as any principles can prevail, those of the Gospel, when embraced in their purity, will be found to produce holiness both of heart and life. So the Apostle declares, in answer to the objection before stated.

To enter fully into the Apostle's argument, see what a man professes at his first entrance into the Church of Christ—

[He is "baptized into Christ:" into Christ, "as dying for his offences, and as raised again for his justification[f]." To the Saviour, so dying and so rising, he feels himself bound to be conformed; dying *to* sin, as He died *for* sin; and rising, like him, to a new and heavenly life[g]. His immersion, at the time of his baptism, represented this to him: and he, in submitting to it, pledged himself to seek the experience of this change in his soul, and never to rest till he shall have attained it. Christ, after his crucifixion, was buried: and in baptism the believer is "buried with Christ;" and engages to become as separate from all his former lusts, as Christ was from all the concerns of this perishing world. And the same power that wrought in Christ, to raise him from the dead, works effectually in his soul, to accomplish in him this wondrous renovation after the Divine image. "Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father;" and by the same glorious power the believer is enabled to "walk in newness of life."

Now, all this a man professes in his baptism: he then, in the sight of God and of the world, acknowledges these to be his most decided *sentiments*, and his unalterable *obligations*. He declares, before all, that he *owes every thing to* Christ, and is bound to *employ every faculty of his soul* for Christ; "living altogether for that Saviour who died for him and rose again[h]."]

Now mark what aspect this profession must have on all his future life—

[I grant, that he may be drawn aside from the path of duty, and go back to all the evil courses from which he

[e] Jude, ver. 4.
[f] Rom. iv. 25.
[g] ver. 8—11.
[h] Rom. xiv. 7, 8.

professes to have been delivered[1]. But, in the midst of all he must say, 'This course of life does *not proceed from* my principles; nor is it *in accordance with* them. No: it is altogether *in opposition to* my *avowed sentiments*, and *is one continued violation* of my most *solemn engagements*. The Gospel is not to be blamed for what I do, any more than it was for the sins of Judas or of Peter, of Ananias or of Demas, or of any other person that ever dishonoured his Christian calling.' In a word, the man who has been baptized into the faith of Christ bears in the face of the whole world this unequivocal testimony: "The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, teaches me, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, I should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world:" and, if it produce not this effect, the fault is in myself alone.

Now, I look upon this as a complete answer to the objection in my text. I admit that a person professing the principles of the Gospel may walk unworthy of them: but I utterly deny that the Gospel has any thing in it to encourage such a life: on the contrary, I assert, that a man's entrance into the Church by baptism is an open acknowledgment that a very different life becomes him; and that he cannot depart from holiness without expressly contravening all his principles and all his obligations.]

APPLICATION—

1. Is there now any one present who *entertains* the objection here made against the Gospel?

[Alas! there are many who will represent the preachers of the Gospel as saying to their hearers, "Only believe; and you may live as you please." But methinks there is not one, amongst all this host of objectors, that believes his own statement. For it is a notorious fact, that those very persons, who decry our ministry as encouraging licentiousness, will, with the very next breath, cry out against us, as making the way to heaven so strait, that none but a few enthusiasts can walk in it. But, supposing them to be sincere, they only betray their own ignorance. St. Paul says in my text, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Christ were baptized into his death?" No: they know nothing of the matter: they know nothing of the Christian's *principles;* nor do they at all consider his *obligations*. The Christian never accounts himself free from *the moral government* of the law, though he knows himself free from its *condemning sentence*. On the contrary, he feels a thousand motives for obedience, which a mere self-righteous moralist has no idea of: and if a proposal

[1] 2 Pet. i. 9. and ii. 20.

were made to him to "sin, that grace might abound," he would reply with indignation and abhorrence, "God forbid!" To you, then, I say, be diligent in your inquiries, and candid in your judgment. Where, amongst the self-righteous moralists, did you ever find such attainments in holiness as in the Apostle Paul? These attainments were the genuine fruit of his principles; as he himself has told us: "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again[k]." Only receive the Gospel as he preached it; and it shall operate in you as it did in the Churches which were planted by him.]

2. Is there any one here who, by his conduct, gives occasion for this objection?

[That there is not any avowed Antinomian amongst us, I can easily believe: but are there not those who, by their ungoverned tempers, or their covetous practices, or their unholy lives, "give occasion to the enemies of religion to blaspheme," and to "speak evil of the truths" which Paul preached? Ah! brethren, if there be one such person in the midst of us, let him remember what our blessed Lord has said: "Woe unto the world because of offences; for it must needs be that offences will come: but woe unto him by whom they come: for it were better that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were cast into the midst of the sea, than that he should offend one of God's little ones[l]." It is a lamentable fact, that one man who dishonours the Gospel by an unholy conversation, does more injury to the souls of men, than ten holy men can do them good. Every one, however blind to the excellencies of the godly, has his eyes open to behold the faults of those who profess godliness; aye, and his mouth open too, to report and aggravate all the evil that he has either seen or heard: for it is by this that worldly men seek to justify themselves in their contempt of a religion which is so disgraced. I charge you then, my dear brethren, guard against every thing which can produce these fatal effects; and beg of God rather to cut you off from the earth at once, than to suffer you to become a stumbling-block to the world, and a scandal to his Church.]

3. I trust there are those present who bear in mind and exemplify their baptismal vows—

[Yes, I hope there are amongst us many who "walk worthy of their high calling," and "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour" by a holy and heavenly conversation. To such

[k] 2 Cor. v. 14 [l] Luke xvii. 1, 2.

persons I would say, be steadfast in your course, and endeavour to "abound more and more." And, that you may see what heights are to be attained, set the Lord Jesus Christ before you both in his death and resurrection; that, "being planted in the likeness of the one, ye may be also in the likeness of the other[m]." What had he to do with the cares or pleasures of this world, when he was "buried" in the grave? Or when has a moment's intermission of his services to God occurred, since his resurrection from the dead? Let this, then, be your pattern, both in your death unto sin, and in your living unto righteousness: and, as you acknowledge yourselves to have "been bought with a price, seek and labour to glorify Him with your bodies and your spirits, which are his[n]."]

[m] ver. 5. [n] 1 Cor. vi. 20.

MDCCCXLVI.

THE CHRISTIAN RISEN WITH CHRIST IN NEWNESS OF LIFE.

Rom. vi. 8—11. *Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

THE Gospel in every age, when freely and faithfully delivered, has been calumniated as injurious to morality. But St. Paul, though he well knew how his doctrines would be misrepresented, did not on that account mutilate the Gospel, or declare it less freely than it had been revealed to him: he pro claimed salvation altogether by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, without any works or deservings on our part: but at the same time he shewed that good works, though excluded from any share in justifying the soul, would of necessity be practised by every believer; because the believer, by his very profession, was, and could not but be, "dead unto sin, and alive unto righteousness." He shewed, that there would of necessity be in the believer's soul a conformity to his Lord and Saviour, since he bound himself to it in his baptismal engagements, or rather professed

to have the actual experience of it before he was baptized; so that he must be a hypocrite, and no true believer, if he was not holy both in heart and life. To this effect he speaks in the whole of the preceding context[a]; — — — and in the words which we have just read, he confirms the idea, and founds upon it an animated exhortation.

To elucidate this difficult, but important subject, we shall consider,

I. The truth he assumes—

[He takes it for granted that the believer is "dead with Christ." The believer, by virtue of his union with Christ, partakes in all that Christ either did or suffered for him. Was Christ crucified, dead, and buried? The believer also is crucified, dead, and buried: only Christ underwent this in his body; whereas the believer experiences it in his soul. The believer has what is called "the old man," or "the body of sin:" and *this* it is which undergoes a change equivalent to that which Christ experienced in his mortal body. This old man is "crucified." Crucifixion was a long protracted punishment: but though the death of the crucified person was slow and gradual, it was sure. It is in this way that "the old man," or "the body of sin," in the believer, is destroyed: is is not so instantly slain, as never to move again: but it is nailed to the cross: it is gradually weakened: and, in the purpose and intention and determination of the believer, it is as really dead, as if it were already altogether annihilated. The believer, at his baptism, considered this as solemnly engaged for on his part, and as shadowed forth, yea, and as pledged also to him on the part of God, in the rite itself: "he was baptized into Christ's death, and buried, as it were, with Christ by baptism into death." This was *his profession;* and this is *his obligation:* and wherever true and saving faith exists in the soul, this profession is realized, and this obligation performed. Hence it may be assumed as an universal truth, that, as a scion participates in the state of the stock into which it has been engrafted, so the believer, engrafted as he is into a crucified Saviour, "is planted together with him in the likeness of his death," or, in other words, is "dead with Christ."]

In close connexion with this is,

II. The persuasion he intimates—

"We believe," says he. "that we shall also live with him."

[a] ver. 1—7.

[It is not in his death only that the believer is conformed to Christ, but in his resurrection also. As the believer has an "old man," which dies, so he has also "a new man," which lives: and in the latter, no less than in the former, he resembles Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ, in his risen and ascended state, lives *with* God, and *to* God, employing for his God and Father all the power that has been committed to him. Thus the believer lives in a state of intimate fellowship with God, consecrating to him all his newly-acquired powers, and improving for him every faculty that he possesses. This is his privilege, no less than his duty: and therefore we may be fully persuaded that the weakest believer, if truly upright, shall attain this high and honourable employment.]

This persuasion is founded on a firm and solid basis—

[We "know that Christ dieth no more." Those whom he raised to life, as Lazarus and others, were constrained at last to pay the debt which our nature owes, and to yield to the stroke of death: but "over Christ death hath no more dominion." He so fully expiated sin, that none of its penal consequences attach to him any longer. But the life which he possesses has both perpetuity and perfection, being wholly and eternally devoted to the care of his people, and the honour of his heavenly Father. And here is the believer's security: "Because Christ liveth, he shall live also[b]." The believer's "life is hid with Christ in God;" yea, "Christ himself is his life:" and therefore we may be assured, that his believing people shall be preserved to "appear with him in glory[c]." We *do* live *in* him: and therefore we *shall* live *with* him for evermore.]

From hence is deduced,

III. The duty he inculcates—

["Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." This should be a point fixed and settled in our minds: I am a Christian: I am dead to sin: I have no more to do with "my former lusts in my ignorance[d]," than Christ himself has with the "sins which he once bore in his own body on the tree." "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," have no more charms for me[e]: those "lords which once had dominion over me," are now dead; and I am liberated from their yoke[f]. As a Christian, I possess a new and heavenly life: I

[b] John xiv. 19. [c] Col iii. 3, 4.
[d] 1 Pet. i. 14. and iv. 2, 3. [e] 1 John ii. 15, 16.
[f] This is the precise idea contained in ver. 7.

am alive unto God, as Christ himself is; and must live unto God, as Christ himself does. There is not an act performed by Christ either in providence or grace, which has not respect to the glory of his Father: so, "whether I eat, or drink, or whatever I do, I must do all to the glory of God[g]." As for being satisfied with any lower standard, it is impossible: my Christian profession utterly forbids it. Those who seek to be justified by their works, may be satisfied with such a tale of bricks, as shall, in their apprehension, screen them from punishment; but I can be satisfied with nothing but a perfect conformity to Christ. My lusts that are crucified, shall never (God helping me) come down from the cross: there they are doomed to perish: and the sooner they die, the better. My new life shall be spent as Christ's is, in executing the office assigned me, and in glorifying my God. Christians, this is the state to which you are to aspire; and if you rest in any thing short of this, you are not worthy of the Christian name.]

In this subject we may SEE,

1. The proper tendency of the Gospel—

[The proper tendency of the Gospel is, to "sanctify us wholly," and to make us pure, as Christ himself is pure[h]. And let the enemies of the Gospel calumniate it ever so much as tending to licentiousness, they shew that they believe it to be a doctrine according to godliness, by the excessive offence which they take at the smallest inconsistency in the Christian's conduct. If they did not know that his principles *required*, and *tended to*, the highest possible perfection, why are they so offended, and why do they exult so much, at the smallest imperfection? The proper tendency of the Gospel then is holiness, the enemies themselves being judges.]

2. The true criterion whereby to judge of our faith in Christ—

[We will not disparage other parts of Christian experience; but the only safe test whereby to try ourselves, is, the degree in which we are dead to sin, and alive to God — — — "The tree must be known by its fruits" — — —]

3. The connexion between our duty and our happiness—

[We have fixed the standard of Christian duty high. True: but does any one doubt, whether such a conformity to Christ be not also our truest happiness? Verily, heaven itself consists in this: "We shall be like him, when we shall see him as he is[i]."]

[g] 1 Cor. x. 31. [h] 1 Thess. v. 23. 1 John iii. 3.
[i] 1 John iii. 2.

MDCCCXLVII.

A PROMISE OF VICTORY OVER SIN.

Rom. vi. 14. *Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*

IT is often made a ground of objection against the Gospel, that it is unfavourable to morality. But the very reverse of this is true; for the Gospel not only inculcates moral duties as strictly as the law itself, but suggests far stronger motives for the performance of them, and even provides strength whereby we shall be enabled to perform them. A great part of this epistle was written on purpose to establish the doctrine of justification by faith: and yet here is one whole chapter devoted entirely to the enforcing of universal holiness, and to the removing of all ground for the objection before referred to: and in the text an express declaration is given, as from God himself, that sin shall never regain its ascendency over the hearts of his people. We shall consider,

I. The promise here given us—

The promise is express, and relates to our deliverance from sin, of whatever kind it be—

[Sin of almost every kind has dominion over the unregenerate man. All persons indeed are not addicted to the same lusts; nor do they gratify any one lust in the same degree: but the seeds of all evil are in the hearts of men; and if any person abstain from any particular act of sin, it is rather because he is not strongly tempted to commit it, than because he has not a propensity to commit it; and it is universally found, that the sins, which are peculiar to our age, our constitution, our situation and circumstances in life, do habitually get the dominion over us. But God promises, that it shall not be so with his people; that they shall be delivered from this ignominious bondage; and be enabled to resist the solicitations of appetite and passion.

We must not however imagine that this promise extends to absolute perfection: for, however desirable the attainment of perfection might be in some points of view, it is not the lot of any in this world. Even the most eminent of God's saints have failed, and *that* too, in those very points wherein their peculiar eminence consisted: Abraham, Moses, Job, and all others, have

proved sufficiently, "that there is not a just man on earth that liveth and sinneth not:" and that, "if any say they have no sin, they deceive themselves, and the truth is not in them." Nor does the Apostle mean that sin, even of a grosser kind, shall never, in any instance, be found in a child of God; for, as "in many things we all offend," so, under the influence of strong temptation, we may act very unsuitably to our holy calling: Noah, Lot, David, Solomon, afford melancholy proofs of such weakness and depravity. But *this* is asserted in the text, and attested by the universal voice of Scripture, *that no child of God shall ever give himself up to the wilful and habitual indulgence of any one sin whatever.* No: every child of God will watch against sin in the heart, as well as in the act; and will pray and fight against it to the latest hour of his life———— And the reason why he never *can* sin in the same wilful and habitual way that he did before, is, that he has the seed of God, or a living principle of grace, within him, that constantly impels him to hate and flee from all iniquity[a]; and, "because he is Christ's, he cannot but daily crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts"———]

The limiting of this promise to believers leads us to shew,

II. Its connexion with our new-covenant state—

Believers are "no longer under the law but under grace"—

[Once they were, like others, under a covenant, which cursed them for disobedience, but afforded them no hope of pardon for past offences, nor any means of resisting sin in future: but now they have embraced that better covenant, the covenant of grace, wherein God offers them a full remission of all their former sins, and assures them that he himself will give them grace sufficient in every time of need. On this promise they rely, knowing by bitter experience that they have not in themselves a sufficiency even to think a good thought, and that God alone can give them either to will or to do any good thing.]

It is on this very account that God guarantees to them, if we may so speak, the attainment of universal holiness—

[By embracing God's covenant, *they become his children*, members of his family, and heirs of his glory. Now God's honour is concerned that his own children shall not be left in bondage to the devil———— Besides, after having *made* them

[a] 1 John iii. 9.

heirs of his glory, he never will leave them under the power of a corrupt nature; because that would incapacitate them for the fruition of his glory, even if they were admitted to a participation of it: an unholy nature would utterly unfit them for the services and enjoyments of heaven — — — But there is yet another reason why God fulfils this promise to them; *God has made it a part of his covenant*, that he will cleanse his people from all their filthiness and all their idols[b]; and pledged his word that he will not only forgive all their sins, but cleanse them from all unrighteousness[c] — — — Now this promise they rest upon, and plead as their only hope; and will God, who cannot lie, rescind it? No: he will fulfil it to them in the time and manner that he judges most conducive to his own glory.]

To IMPROVE this subject, let us observe that,

1. To lay hold on this covenant should be the first great object of our lives—

[Where else shall we find deliverance from the judgments denounced against us for our violations of the first covenant, or obtain strength for our obedience to God's holy will? All efforts of our own will be utterly in vain; it is Christ alone that can effect either the one or the other of these things; and it is only by looking to him, and laying hold of his covenant, that we can obtain these blessings at his hands. But let us once obtain an interest in him, and all these things are ours; pardon, peace, holiness, glory, all are ours, the very instant we believe in him. What then can be put in competition with this? Verily all the things of time and sense sink into utter insignificance, when compared with this: and therefore let us regard this as the one thing needful, and make it the one object of our whole lives to be found in Christ, and to secure the blessings which he has purchased for us.]

2. None, however, can have any interest in the covenant of grace who do not experience deliverance from sin—

[Though no man is admitted into the covenant of grace on account of any holiness that there is in him, yet none are left unholy after that they have been admitted into it. "That very grace of God which bringeth us salvation, teaches us to deny every species and degree of ungodliness[d]." To fail in this would be to defeat a principal end of Christ's death[e]. If there be any *allowed* sin in us, we deceive ourselves, and our religion is vain[f].]

[b] Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27. [c] 1 John i. 9. [d] Tit. ii. 11, 12.
[e] Tit. ii. 14. [f] Jam. i. 26.

3. But none have any reason to despair on account of the inveteracy of their lusts—

[Were it required of us to purify our hearts by any exertions of our own, we might well despair. But holiness is not only enjoined; *it is promised;* it is promised by Him, who is able also to perform. Let none then say, "My wound is incurable;" for with God all things are possible: and *we*, however weak in ourselves, shall be "able to do all things through Christ who strengtheneth us." If we were at this instant led captive by ten thousand lusts, no sin whatever should have dominion over us in future, provided only we took refuge in the covenant of grace — — —]

4. Nevertheless, this promise does not supersede the necessity of prayer and watchfulness on our part—

[God's promises are free; "yet will he be inquired of by us before he will perform them." Nor are we at liberty to run into temptation because he has promised to keep us; for that would be to tempt him: but, in the exercise of prayer and watchfulness, he will keep us. If Paul, that chosen vessel, was obliged to keep his body under, and to bring it into subjection, lest he himself should be a cast-away, surely the same care and diligence are necessary on our part. It is our comfort however, that, while we run, "we do not run as uncertainly;" and while "we fight, it is not as one who only beats the air[s]:" for victory is secured for us, and God himself "will bruise Satan under our feet," and preserve us blameless to his heavenly kingdom.]

[s] 1 Cor. ix. 26.

MDCCCXLVIII.

CONVERSION A GROUND OF THANKSGIVING.

Rom. vi. 17. *God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.*

EXEMPTION from the punishment of sin is doubtless an inestimable blessing; but deliverance from its power is equally precious. The most advanced Christians greatly delight in this part of salvation. Hence St. Paul thanks God for bestowing this mercy on the Church at Rome. We shall consider from the text,

I. The character of all while in an unconverted state—

All are "servants of sin" till they receive converting grace—

[All indeed are not slaves to the same sin. Some are led captive by their lusts and passions: others are drawn away by the pleasures and vanities of the world: others are under the dominion of pride and self-righteousness; but all, without exception, are alienated from the life of God[a]: all are full of unbelief and self-sufficiency.]

This, however humiliating, is an indisputable truth—

[The Scriptures every where assert this respecting fallen man[b]. The most eminent saints confess it to have been their own case[c]: experience proves it with respect to ourselves. The very excuse which men offer in extenuation of their sins, viz. "that they *cannot* live as God requires," establishes this truth.]

But it does not remain so in regenerate persons; as appears from,

II. The change they experience in conversion—

God instructs them in "the form of sound doctrine"—

[There is in Scripture a "form of sound doctrine." This in all its parts is set before them. They are enlightened by the Spirit to understand it: they have it applied with divine efficacy to their souls.]

This form of doctrine they "obey from the heart"—

[They yet indeed feel a law of sin in their members; but "they no more serve sin" willingly as before: on the contrary, "they now delight in the law of God." They obey it, not in appearance only or by constraint, but willingly and without reserve.]

They are now cast, as it were, into the mould of the Gospel—

[This is the force of the original; and is the marginal version[d]: this is also the case, wherever the Gospel takes effect[e]. The wax has every lineament of the seal, and the coin of the die: so do they resemble God, who are renewed by the Gospel[f].]

[a] Eph. iv. 18.
[b] John viii. 34. Rom. vi. 16. with the text.
[c] Tit. iii. 3.
[d] Εἰς ὃν παρεδόθητε τύπον διδαχῆς.
[e] Col. i. 6.
[f] 2 Cor. iii. 18.

The blessedness of this change will appear if we consider,

III. How great a cause of thankfulness such a conversion is—

The Apostle thanks God that they were no longer slaves of sin—

[Sin is at all times a ground of shame and sorrow[g]. Paul esteemed it so in his own particular case[h]: every saint of God views it in the same light: St. Paul therefore did not mean that their subjection to it was a ground of thankfulness; but the subject of his thanksgiving is, that the Romans, who once were slaves of sin, were now entirely devoted to God.]

This is a ground of unspeakable thankfulness on many accounts:

1. On account of *the moral change* in the persons themselves—

[What can be more deplorable than to be a slave of sin? What can be more truly blessed than to have all our actions and affections corresponding with the word of God? Surely this is a ground of thankfulness.]

2. On account of *the effects* of this change *on society*—

[How much better member of society must a child of God be than a slave of sin! How much happier would the world be, if such a change were general! On this account therefore it became the Apostle to be thankful.]

3. On account of *the eternal consequences* that must follow this change—

[They who die slaves of sin must suffer its punishment: they are now the children of the devil, and must soon be his companions in misery[i]; but the regenerate are children and heirs of God. Surely eternity will scarcely suffice to thank God for this.]

We shall conclude with a suitable ADDRESS—

1. To the unregenerate—

[All who have not been freed from sin are of this number. Alas! the friends of such have little cause to thank God for them: they have rather reason to weep and mourn[k]: they may indeed bless God that the stroke of vengeance has been

[g] Rom. vi. 21.
[h] 1 Tim. i. 13.
[i] John viii. 44.
[k] Jer. xiii. 17.

delayed. O that all such persons might know the day of their visitation! Let all cry to God for his converting grace: nor let any rest in an external or partial change. Nothing but a cordial compliance with the Gospel, and a real conformity to it, will avail us in the day of judgment.]

2. To the regenerate—

[The foregoing marks have sufficiently characterized these persons. Such persons will do well to reflect on the mercy they have received: the recollection of their past guilt will serve to keep them *humble*. A consciousness of their remaining infirmities will make them *watchful*: a view of the change wrought in them will make them *thankful*. Let the regenerate then adopt the words of the Psalmist[l] — let them beware of ever returning to their former ways[m]: let them press forward for higher degrees of holiness and glory[n].]

3. To those who doubt to which class they belong—

[Many, from what has been wrought in them, have reason to hope; yet, from what still remains to be done, they find reason to fear. Hence they are long in painful suspense. But let such remember, that sin, if truly lamented and resisted, does not prove them unregenerate[o]: on the contrary, their hatred of it, and opposition to it, are hopeful signs that they are in part renewed: nevertheless, let them endeavour to put this matter beyond a doubt[p]. Let them look to Christ as their almighty deliverer[q]: let them pray for, and depend upon, his promised aid[r].]

[l] Ps. ciii. 1—3. [m] 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21. [n] Phil. iii. 13, 14.
[o] Jam. iii. 2. [p] 2 Pet. i. 10. [q] John viii. 36.
[r] 2 Cor. xii. 9.

MDCCCXLIX.

UNPROFITABLENESS AND FOLLY OF SIN.

Rom. vi. 21. *What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.*

AS an appeal to the judgment of men is, when just, the most powerful mode of silencing the contentious, so an appeal to their conscience is the strongest possible method of convincing the ignorant, and of humbling the proud. With such kinds of argumentation the Scripture abounds. God himself appeals to his apostate people: "What iniquity have

your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and become vain?" "Have I been a wilderness to Israel[a]?" Thus, in the passage before us, St. Paul, labouring to impress the Christians at Rome with a sense of the indispensable necessity of renouncing all their former ways, and devoting themselves wholly to the Lord, puts to them this pungent question; "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" To answer this question, no strength of intellect, no extent of information, is required: nothing is wanting but an honest and upright heart. The poor, as well as the rich, can tell whether they have been happy in the ways of sin: to the one therefore as well as to the other, we would address the language of our text; entreating every one to consult the records of his own conscience, and to answer to himself the question, as in the presence of his God.

The points respecting which we would make our appeal to all, are,

I. The unprofitableness of sin, as learned by experience—

Whether men have drunk deep of the cup of pleasure, or have followed their earthly inclinations with more measured steps, we would ask, in reference to all their former ways,

1. What fruit of them had ye *at the time?*

[Sin, previous to the commission of it, promises much: but what solid satisfaction has it ever afforded us? Suppose a man to have had all the means of gratification that ever Solomon possessed, and, like him, to have withheld his heart from no joy; still, we would ask him, Was your pleasure of any long duration? Was it without alloy? Is not that true which Solomon has said, "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness[b]?" I doubt not but that every man who will faithfully relate his own experience, will "say of laughter, It is mad; and of mirth, What doeth it[c]?"

A similar testimony must be given by those who have been the most sober and discreet. They have not, it is true, the

[a] Jer. ii. 5, 31. [b] Prov. xiv. 13. [c] Eccl. ii. 2.

same measure of guilt upon their consciences, as they would have had, if, like the others, they had "run into every excess of riot:" but if, as must be confessed by all, they have lived to themselves, and not unto the Lord, we must put the same question to them, Have you found real happiness in your ways? Have you not, in the midst of all your self-complacency, had a secret consciousness that you were not prepared for death and judgment? and did not that consciousness embitter your lives, so far at least, that you could not bear to think of the state of your souls, and the realities of the eternal world?———God had said, that "the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, which casteth up mire and dirt." Whatever peace therefore you have felt has been a false peace, which in reality rendered you more miserable, in proportion as it hid your misery from your view. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked[d]."]

2. What fruit have ye *in the retrospect?*

[Supposing sin to have made us ever so happy at the time, how does it appear when we look back upon it? Is not that which was "rolled as a sweet morsel under the tongue become as gall in the stomach?" Would not the voluptuary be well pleased on the whole, that the criminal excesses of his former life had never been committed? Would he not be well satisfied to have lost the gratifications, if he could expunge from his conscience, and from the book of God's remembrance, the guilt which they have entailed upon him? ———And if the man who has sought his happiness in less criminal enjoyments, but has wasted in mere earthly pursuits the time that was given him to prepare for eternity, could recall his mispent hours, would he not rather that they should have been spent in seeking the things belonging to his peace? Though he may not look with complacency on a pious character who has given up himself unreservedly to God, does he not secretly reverence that man, and wish that his latter end might be like his?———]

3. What fruit have ye *in the prospect* of your great account?

[If ever we look forward to death and judgment, what do we think of a sensual or worldly life in reference to those seasons? Will it afford us any pleasure in a dying hour, to reflect, that we have, on such and such occasions, gratified our criminal desires, or indulged in revelling and excess? Or will a life of mere external decency afford us comfort, when we consider how we have neglected God and our own souls? Shall

[d] Isai. lvii. 20, 21.

we not then wish that we had paid more attention to the Saviour, and lived under the influence of his blessed Spirit? Still more, when standing at the judgment-seat of Christ, will it be any joy to us, that, whilst in this world, we took so little pains to obtain mercy of the Lord, and to secure his favour? ——— Alas! alas! How will a carnal or worldly life *then* appear? Would to God, that we would view things *now*, as we shall surely view them *in that day!*]

Instructed by these lessons of experience, let us proceed to contemplate,

II. The folly of sin, as taught us by grace—

The very first effect of grace is to humble us before God. The more enlarged our views are of our past transgressions, the more shall we blush and be confounded in the remembrance of them. Of every true Christian it may with certainty be affirmed, that, like Job, he "abhors himself, and repents in dust and ashes." He is "ashamed,"

1. That he has so requited the goodness of his God—

[In an unconverted state, men can receive innumerable blessings at the Lord's hand, and never consider from whence they flow. Even the great work of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ is not regarded as any sufficient incentive to love and serve him. But no sooner does grace enter into the soul, than all the wonders of God's love and mercy are seen in their proper colours; and the man is amazed at his more than brutish ingratitude. How wonderful does it appear, that God should so love him as to give his only dear Son to die for him; and yet that he should live all his days in an utter contempt of that stupendous mystery, trampling on that precious blood that was shed to cleanse him from sin, and doing despite to that blessed Spirit, who strove to bring him to repentance! Verily, that expression of Agur is adopted by him, not as an hyperbole, but as a just representation of his case; "I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man[e]." The circumstance of his being forgiven is so far from obliterating this sense of his baseness, that it renders the feeling of it incomparably more poignant; according as the Prophet Ezekiel hath said, "Then shall ye lothe yourselves for all your iniquities, and for all your abominations, after that I am pacified towards you, saith the Lord."]

[e] Prov. xxx. 2.

2. That he has bartered for such trifles an immortal soul—

[The loss of the soul is scarcely thought of, when the fascinations of sin are strongly felt: but after a man is awakened to see, that "the end of these things is death," what folly and madness does a life of sin appear! Even if the whole world could have been gained, it would be regarded as of no value in comparison of the soul: how empty then and vain do such trifles as he has obtained appear, when for the enjoyment of them his eternal interests have been sacrificed, and the everlasting wrath of God incurred! The folly of Esau in selling his birthright for a mess of pottage may be considered as wisdom in comparison of his, in selling heaven and his immortal soul for the transient pleasures of sin: and, if an irrevocable sentence of exclusion from the heavenly inheritance be passed upon him, he is ready to acknowledge the justice of it, or, like the man without the wedding garment, to confess by silence the equity of God's judgments.]

ADDRESS—

1. Those who are yet seeking their happiness in the creature—

[We need not here discriminate between different degrees of guilt. It is sufficient for our condemnation that we have lived to ourselves rather than to God. Whatever we may have had recourse to for consolation, it has proved only like the husks with which the Prodigal sought to satisfy the cravings of nature: nothing but the bread that is in our Father's house can ever satisfy an immortal soul. O let us think, What must be the consequence of living at a distance from God[f]? Speak not peace to yourselves in such a state! Well does St. Peter say, "What must *the end* be of them that obey not the Gospel of God?" Only let *the end* of our course be kept in view, and we shall see the folly and madness of every pursuit that has not an immediate tendency to secure the blessedness of heaven.]

2. Those who are seeking their happiness in God—

[You have no reason to be ashamed of the fruit which you have gathered. *At the time* that you have been serving God, you have found "the work of righteousnees to be peace," and, that "in keeping God's commandments there is great reward." *In the retrospect* of a life devoted to God there is the purest joy. "Our rejoicing," says St. Paul, "is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we

[f] See Jer. vi. 15, 16.

have had our conversation in the world. And O! what comfort is there *in the prospect* of our great account! We know that "if we have our fruit unto holiness, our end will be everlasting life:" and if in our last hours we can say with Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," we may add with him, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me." Go on then, brethren, "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." We congratulate you that you have learned to blush and to be ashamed of all your former ways: and we would, *as we are specially instructed by God himself*, urge you to a most careful observance of all the commandments of your God[g]. This is the way to preserve a good conscience before him; and so acting, "you will not be ashamed before him at his coming[h]."]

[g] See Ezek. xliii. 10th verse to the first clause of the 12th.
[h] 1 John ii. 28.

MDCCCL.

MAN'S DESERT, AND GOD'S MERCY.

Rom. vi. 23. *The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

THE distribution of rewards and punishments in the day of judgment will be in perfect agreement with the works of men; the righteous will be exalted to happiness; the wicked be doomed to misery. The Gospel makes no difference with respect to this: it provides relief for the penitent, but rather aggravates than removes the condemnation of the impenitent. But it opens to us an important fact: namely, that the punishment of the ungodly is the proper fruit and deserved recompence of their own works: whereas the reward bestowed upon the godly is a free unmerited gift of God for Christ's sake. The Apostle has been shewing, throughout this whole chapter, that the Gospel increases, instead of relaxing, our obligation to good works; and that it will avail for the salvation of those only who "have their fruit unto holiness:" but in the text he assures us, that

they who are saved will be saved by mere grace; whereas they who perish will perish utterly through their own demerit.

In the words before us, we have a short, but accurate, description of,

I. Man's desert—

By "death," we must understand everlasting misery—

[It is a truth that temporal death was introduced by sin: but that cannot be the whole that is meant by the Apostle in the text, because the "death" procured by sin stands in direct opposition to the "life" which is bestowed by God, which is expressly said to be "eternal." By "death" therefore we understand an everlasting banishment from God's presence, together with a "suffering of his vengeance in eternal fire."]

This is the penalty that is due to sin—

[It is in vain that people endeavour to soften down the expressions of Scripture upon this subject, and to substitute annihilation for misery. Our blessed Lord, in his account of the judgment-day, declares that he himself, as the Judge of quick and dead, will doom the wicked to a participation of the misery inflicted on the fallen angels, and that their punishment shall be of the very same duration with the happiness of the righteous[a].

Nor is this more than the real *desert* of sin. The word we translate "wages," means "provisions[b]," which in the earlier part of the Roman empire constituted the only pay of soldiers: and it must be confessed that a soldier's pay, at the best, is but a very moderate compensation for the dangers and fatigues of war: his wages are certainly no higher than justice demands. Thus the penal evil of damnation is no more than a just recompence for the moral evil of sin: it is the "wages" due to sin.

It is worthy of remark also, that this awful doom is not spoken of as the penalty of many or of great sins, but of "*sin*," of every sin, whether great or small. Every "transgression of God's holy law is sin[c];" and, though all sins are not of equal malignity, there is not any sin which does not deserve God's wrath and fiery indignation, or against which an everlasting curse is not denounced[d].

How terrible then is the desert of every man, of the more moral and decent, as well as of the immoral and profane! for

[a] Matt. xxv. 41, 46. See also Mark ix. 43—48. [b] ὀψώνια.
[c] 1 John iii. 4. [d] Gal. iii. 10.

"all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" and therefore all are obnoxious to the punishment of sin.]

Let us now turn our thoughts to a more pleasing subject, namely,

II. God's mercy—

Notwithstanding our ill desert, God has tendered to us everlasting life—

["He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance and live." He has opened the gates of heaven, and invited sinners of every description to enter in. Nor has he required any thing to be done in order to purchase an admittance into it: he offers it freely, as a "gift" to all who will accept it. His invitation is to all who wish for it, to those also who have no money, to come and receive it at his hands "without money, and without price[e]." In this he has strongly marked the different grounds of a sinner's condemnation, and a saint's acceptance. Misery is awarded to the one, as "*wages*" earned; and happiness is conferred upon the other, as a *gift* bestowed. Indeed our minds must be humbled: and we must be willing to accept salvation as a gift: for, if we carry any price whatever in our hands, we cut ourselves off from all hope of obtaining the desired blessing[f].]

This gift however is bestowed only "through the Lord Jesus Christ"—

[All possibility of regaining happiness by the covenant of works was prevented by the very terms of that covenant: in token of which, the way to the tree of life was obstructed by a fiery sword[g]. But another, and a better "way, is opened to it through the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we may have boldness, and access with confidence" into the presence of our God[h]. Through him, as a Mediator, God can exercise mercy towards us in perfect consistency with his own honour; and through him, *as the appointed channel*, God will convey to us all the blessings of grace and glory. But then he expects that we *come to him through Christ*, and *receive his blessings from Christ:* for, as there is no other way unto the Father but through the Son[i], so neither is there any way of obtaining from the Father, but by receiving out of the fulness which he has treasured up for us in Christ Jesus[k].]

ADDRESS—

[e] Isai. lv. 1. [f] Gal. v. 2, 4. [g] Gen. iii. 24.
[h] Heb. x. 19, 20. [i] John xiv. 6. [k] Col. i. 19. John i. 16.

1. Those who are living in any allowed sin—

[We will suppose you are free from any gross immoralities; but that you are neglecting the great concerns of your souls, or attending to them with only a divided heart. Consider then, I beseech you, what you are doing: you are earning wages every day, every hour, every moment: whether you think of it or not, you are earning wages, and the day of reckoning is near at hand, when they shall be paid you by a just and holy God. Every act, every word, every thought is increasing the sum that shall be paid you: and who can calculate the amount of a debt which has been increasing with awful rapidity from the first moment that you began to act? Yes, you have been doing nothing throughout your whole lives, but earning wages that shall be paid you to the full, or, in other words, "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath[l]." Consider, if the desert of *one* sin is death, What must be your desert, whose sins are more in number than the sands upon the sea-shore? Reflect on this, while there is an opportunity of cancelling the debt, and while the mercy of God can be extended to you. But remember, that you must not attempt to discharge the smallest part of this debt yourselves: if you take but one single sin upon you, you must suffer death for ever. Go therefore to Christ, and through him unto the Father: go with the guilt of all your sins upon you; cast yourselves entirely upon the mercy of your God; plead nothing but the merits of his dear Son; and "look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life[m]."]

2. Those who have obtained mercy, and deliverance from sin—

[Numberless are the considerations which should excite your gratitude for the mercies you have received. Consider the greatness of the guilt that has been forgiven you; the riches of the glory which has been conferred upon you; the freeness with which it has been bestowed; and, above all, the means which have been used in order that you might be partakers of these benefits, even the appointment of God's only-begotten Son to be your dying Saviour, and your living Head. Consider these things, I say, and then judge what ought to be the frame of your minds. What an abhorrence should you have of sin! What gratitude should you feel towards that God who exercised such mercy towards you, and towards that adorable Jesus, through whose mediation alone it could ever have been communicated! Stir up yourselves then to "render unto God according to these benefits;" and exert yourselves to the uttermost to "glorify him with your bodies and your spirits, which are his[n]."]

[l] Rom. ii. 5. [m] Jude, ver. 21. [n] 1 Cor. vi. 20.

MDCCCLI.

DEADNESS TO THE LAW, AND UNION WITH CHRIST.

Rom. vii. 4. *My brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.*

THAT the Gospel is hostile to the interests of morality, is an objection that has been raised against it, from the first promulgation of it by the Apostles, even to the present age. That the Gospel is a most wonderful display of grace and mercy, must be acknowledged: but it does not therefore encourage any man to live in sin: on the contrary, it teaches men, and binds them by every possible tie, to "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." To this effect the Apostle speaks throughout the whole preceding chapter. He begins with stating the objection urged against the Gospel; "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" And then he answers it at large; and affirms, that the covenant of grace, so far from invalidating our obligation to good works, absolutely secures the performance of them[a]. In the chapter before us he is continuing the same argument, and putting it in a new light: he represents men as by nature married to the law, and bringing forth fruit to sin and death; but afterwards, as separated from the law, and married to Christ, in order to their bringing forth the fruits of holiness to the praise and glory of God.

His words will naturally lead us to consider,

I. The state to which we are brought by the death of Christ—

We are all by nature bound to the law—

[God gave his law to Adam as a covenant, promising life to him if he were obedient, and denouncing death against him as the penalty of disobedience. Under that covenant we all

[a] Rom. vi. 14—16.

are born: and on the terms prescribed by it we look for happiness or misery in the future world. The connexion between us and it is indissoluble; like that of an husband; our obligations to whom nothing but death can dissolve.]

But by the death of Christ we are liberated from it—

[Christ, our incarnate Lord, has fulfilled every part of God's law; enduring its penalties, as well as executing its commands: and this he has done, as our Surety: so that, if we believe in him, we may plead his obedience unto death in bar of all the punishment it denounces against us; and may even plead it also as having procured for us a title to all its promised blessings. Our blessed Lord, in fulfilling the law, has abrogated it *as a covenant;* and has obtained for us a new and better covenant, of which he himself is the Surety[b]. *As a rule of conduct,* the law does, and ever must, continue in force; because it is the transcript of the mind and will of God, and contains a perfect rule for the conduct of his creatures[c]: but *as a covenant* it is dissolved; and is, in respect of us, dead; so that we have no more connexion with it than a woman has with her deceased husband: our obligations to it, and our expectations from it, have ceased for ever[d]. This is a just and beautiful representation of the believer's state: perhaps there is not in all the Scriptures another image that conveys a complete idea of our state, in so clear, and so intelligible a way as this. We all see in a moment the bonds by which a woman is tied to her husband during his life, and the total dissolution of them all by his death: we see that the deceased husband has no longer any authority over her, nor can any longer be to her a source either of good or evil. Now if we transfer this idea to the law, and think of the law as a husband that is dead, or as a covenant that is annulled, then we shall have a just view of a believer's state respecting it. Throughout the whole context, St. Paul expatiates so fully upon this point, and explains himself so clearly, that we cannot possibly mistake his meaning[e]. The only doubt that can arise is, what law he refers to? But this doubt is dissipated in a moment: for he speaks of that law which prohibits inordinate desire; and consequently it is, and must be, the *moral* law[f].]

Such being the liberty which Christ has procured for us, let us consider,

II. The improvement we should make of it—

Our blessed Lord offers himself to us as an husband—

[b] Heb. viii. 6, 8, 13. [c] 1 Cor. ix. 21. [d] Gal. ii. 19.
[e] ver. 1—6. [f] ver. 7.

[Under this idea he is frequently spoken of in the Old Testament[g] ——— The same is also frequently applied to him in the New Testament[h] ——— In some sense indeed it is the espousal only that takes place in this world[i] ——— The consummation is deferred till our arrival in the world above[k] ———]

In this relation we should cordially receive him—

[Our former husband being dead, we are at liberty to be married to another. And where shall we find one who is more worthy of all our love and obedience? If Jesus so loved us when enemies, as to lay down his own life for us, what will he not do for us, when we become bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh; yea, when we become "one spirit with him[l]?" To him then let us unite ourselves by faith, and devote ourselves to him as wholly and exclusively, as the most faithful and affectionate of women does to her newly-acquired lord.]

We shall then have the honour and happiness of bringing forth fruit unto God—

[By our connexion with the law, we have brought forth fruit only unto sin and death: but by the mighty operation of divine grace, we shall be enabled to bring forth fruit unto God, and holiness, and life[m]. We shall no longer live under the influence of a slavish spirit, aiming only at the mere letter of the commandment, and regarding even that as an irksome service; but we shall aspire after the utmost spirit of the commandment, and strive with holy ardour to make the highest possible attainments, longing, if possible, to be "holy as God is holy," and to be "perfect as God is perfect." Our services will resemble those of the heavenly choir, who look, and watch, and pant, as it were, for an opportunity to testify their love to God, and to execute, in all its extent, his holy will.

How should the prospect of such fruit stimulate our desires after Christ! Let us bear in mind, that the bringing of us to such a state was the great object which he sought in giving up himself for us[n]; and let it be also the great object of our solicitude in devoting ourselves to him[o].]

From hence then it APPEARS,

1. How concerned we are to know the law—

[g] Isai. liv. 5. and lxii. 5. Ps. xlv. 10—17, is, as it were, a celebration of the heavenly nuptials.
[h] John iii. 19. Eph. v. 25—27. [i] Hos. ii. 19, 20. 2 Cor. xi. 2.
[k] Rev. xix. 7, 8. and xxi. 9, 10. [l] Eph. v. 30. 1 Cor. vi. 17.
[m] Compare Rom. vi. 21, 22. with our text and context
[n] 1 Pet. ii. 24. [o] Rom. xiv. 7, 8

[It was "to those only who knew the law," that the Apostle addressed himself in our text[p]: others could not have understood his meaning, but would have accounted all his representations "foolishness[q]." Thus shall we also be incapable of entering into the sublime import of this passage, if we do not understand the nature of the law, the extent of its requirements, the awfulness of its penalties, and the hopeless condition of all who are yet under it as a covenant of life and death. But if we have just views of the law, then shall we be prepared for the Gospel, and be determined, through grace, that we will not give sleep to our eyes, or slumber to our eye-lids, till we have obtained an interest in Christ, and been received into a covenant of grace with him, as our Husband, our Saviour, and our ALL.]

2. How interested we are in embracing the Gospel—

[By this we are brought into a new state: we have new relations, both to God and man: our spirit is altogether new, as our attainments also are: our hopes and prospects also are new: "A beggar taken from a dunghill, and united to the greatest of earthly princes[r]," would experience a very small change in comparison of that which we experience, when we enter into the marriage covenant with Christ. O let us consent to his gracious proposals, and give up ourselves wholly unto him; then shall we "know the blessedness of his chosen," and comprehend, as far as such imperfect beings can, the incomprehensible wonders of his love; and after bringing forth fruit to his glory here, we shall be partakers of his kingdom in the world above.]

[p] ver. 1. [q] 1 Cor. ii. 14. [r] 1 Sam. ii. 8.

MDCCCLII.

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE LAW.

Rom. vii. 7. *What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.*

THERE is not any thing, however good, which has not been abused to the vilest purposes. The blessings of providence are rendered subservient to intemperance. The Holy Scriptures also are often wrested to support error. But we must blame not the

things that are perverted, but the persons who pervert them. We must estimate things by their use, and not by their abuse. To this effect the Apostle speaks respecting the law of God[a]; and, in his vindication of it, he opens to us,

I. Its nature—

The law here spoken of must be the *moral law*, because it is that which forbids inordinate desire. Its spirituality may be seen by considering,

1. The commandments in general—

[Our Lord comprises them all in two, namely, love to God, and love to man[b]. Our love to God must be supreme, without intermission or reserve. The smallest defect in the degree or manner of our love is a violation of our duty towards him: our love to our neighbour must resemble our love to ourselves: it must be as extensive, as constant, as uniform, as influential. This is transgressed, not by overt acts only, but by secret thoughts. In this extent our Lord himself explains those very commandments, which we should be most ready to limit and restrict[c]: hence it appears, that we may be blameless respecting the outward breach of the law, and yet have transgressed every one of the commandments throughout our whole lives.]

2. The particular commandment before us—

[This, in the very letter of it, extends to our inclinations and desires: it prohibits all dissatisfaction with our own state or lot; it prohibits all envy at the prosperity of others; it prohibits all desire of any evil or forbidden object; it prohibits all inordinate love even of good and lawful objects; it does not say, that we must not *indulge* a wrong desire, but that we must not *have* it. Well therefore does David say respecting the law, "Thy commandment is exceeding broad[d]."]

It may seem unjust in God to publish such a law, seeing that man in his present fallen state cannot keep it one single hour. But God could not, consistently with his own honour and our good, publish

[a] He had spoken of the law as the *accidental occasion* of sin and death, ver. 5. From hence he supposes that some would object against it as the *cause* of sin and death. But, shuddering at such a blasphemous thought, he refutes the objection; and shews that, instead of being a promoter of sin, it discovered and prohibited sin in its first and most secret workings.

[b] Matt. xxii. 37—40. [c] Matt. v. 21, 22, 27, 28.

[d] Ps. cxix. 96.

a less spiritual law than this; and this will be found both "just and good[e]," if we consider,

II. Its use—

Many are the uses of this law both to saints and sinners, but there is one use in particular mentioned in the text; and to that we shall confine our attention. The nature of sin is but little understood—

[The generality think that sin consists only in the outward act. Hence they suppose themselves in a good and safe state. This was the case with St. Paul himself before his conversion. And it is equally the case with every unconverted man.]

But the law is intended to discover sin to us in its true colours—

[Like a perfect rule, it leads to a discovery of our smallest obliquities. When applied to our motives, and principles, and to the manner and measure of our duties, it shews us that our very best actions are extremely defective. Thus it plucks up by the roots all conceit of our own goodness, and causes us to lie low before God as miserable sinners. It was to a view of the law that St. Paul owed his knowledge of his own sinfulness[f]. And it is by this light that we must see the evil of our state.]

APPLICATION—

1. What "know" *we* of "sin?"

[Have we ever seen the spirituality and extent of the law? Have we ever laid the law as a line to our consciences? Have we ever discovered by it the obliquity of our best actions? Have we ever been bowed down under the weight of our transgressions? Have we ever felt the impossibility of being justified by the law? No attainments in knowledge or goodness will profit us without this. Paul himself, though he thought well of his own state, was really dead while he was ignorant of the law; and when the spirituality of the law was revealed to him, then he saw and confessed himself an undone sinner[g]. Let us then seek increasing views of the law, that we may be made truly humble and contrite.]

2. What know we of the Deliverer from sin?

[There is One who has fulfilled the demands of the law. *His* obedience and righteousness will avail for us. Have we fled to him as the fulfiller of the law for us? Have we taken

[e] ver. 12. [f] The text. [g] ver. 9.

refuge in him who bore its curse for us? Do we see the need of him to "bear the iniquity of our holy things?" Let us then bless God for such a Saviour, and "cleave to him with full purpose of heart."]

3. What regard are we yet daily shewing to the law?

[We are indeed delivered from its penal sanctions; nor ought we to regard it any longer *as a covenant*. But we are still subject to its commands, and ought to receive it *as a rule of life*. If we are sincere, we shall not account even the strictest of its commandments grievous[h]. Let us then remember that it still says to us, "Thou shalt not covet." Let us, in obedience to it, mortify all discontent and envy, all improper and inordinate desire: and let it be the labour of our lives to glorify God by our professed subjection to it.]

[h] 1 John v. 3.

MDCCCLIII.

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE LAW.

Rom. vii. 9. *I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.*

WHEN we behold the extreme supineness of those around us in relation to their eternal concerns, we are naturally led to inquire, What the reason of it is? Is it that they imagine there is no God; or no future state; or no connexion between their present life and their eternal destiny? No: they acknowledge their accountableness to God; but they are ignorant of the rule by which they shall be judged: and hence they conclude that they are in no danger, when, if they were apprised of their real state, they would he filled with alarm and terror. Thus it was with the Apostle Paul previous to his conversion: whilst ignorant of the spiritual nature of God's law, he thought himself secure of acceptance with God: but when he had juster views of the law, he had juster views of his own spiritual condition also. Here then, as in a glass, we see,

I. The apprehensions which ignorant men have of their state before God—

[None are so blind as to think they have never sinned: but the generality suppose that they have never sinned in any great degree, so as to endanger their eternal happiness, or to justify God in consigning them over to eternal misery. If in some respects their *actions* have been incorrect, they have had no bad *intentions:* their *conduct* may have been *bad;* but their *hearts* were *good.* If they have refrained from gross immoralities, and been observant of some outward duties, they will, like the Pharisee, "thank God that they are not as other men;" and will boast before him of the good deeds which they have done[a]. As for being in any danger of perishing, they cannot for a moment admit the idea: they think, that if God were to cast *them* into hell, he would be unjust; that *they* have never merited such a doom: and it would be quite irreconcileable with the goodness of God to suppose him capable of proceeding with such severity against persons of their description. Such were Paul's views of himself; "he was alive without the law once:" having extremely contracted views of his duty, he thought he had done nothing to deserve punishment, and was secure of eternal life and salvation. And such is the delusion by which the whole host of unconverted men are blinded at this day.]

Hence we perceive,

II. The means by which alone they can be brought to a juster knowledge of their state—

[When God was pleased to arrest Paul in his way to Damascus, and to reveal himself to him, he discovered to him the spirituality and extent of the law. Paul had before thought that the commandments related only to outward acts; whereas he was now made to see that an inordinate desire was as much forbidden as the most criminal action; and that an impure or angry thought were in God's sight as adultery or murder[b]: he saw too that the curse of the law was denounced against every violation of its commands; and that it as truly condemned men for a dissatisfied or envious wish, as for the most flagrant transgression[c]. From this time all his delusions vanished: he no longer cherished the fond idea of meriting salvation by his past or future obedience: he saw that he had not in any one action of his life come up to the full demands of the law; and that consequently he must renounce all dependence on the law for his justification before God.

Thus were *his* views rectified: and it is in this way alone that *any one* can attain a just knowledge of his state. "The commandment must come" with power to his conscience: he

[a] Luke xviii. 11, 12. [b] ver. 7. with Matt. v. 22, 28
[c] Gal. iii. 10.

must see *the spirituality* of the law as extending to every thought and motion of the heart, and *the holiness* of the law as unalterably consigning over to the curse every one who shall transgress it in the smallest particular. Then his hopes from it will for ever vanish; and he will seek for mercy solely through the atoning blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus.]

But let us more distinctly consider,

III. The view they will have of themselves, when rightly informed—

[Whilst men are ignorant what the law requires, sin appears to be, as it were, dead, and destitute of power either to enslave or condemn them: but when they have a discovery of the law, they will perceive that sin has all along exercised a tyrannic sway over them, and brought them under the heaviest condemnation. Their whole life will appear to have been one uninterrupted course of sin; and to have been spent, unwittingly indeed, but truly, in "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath." Their best actions now will be viewed as defiled with sin, and as deserving punishment: and they will see their need of one to "bear the iniquity of their holy things," as well as of their more evident transgressions. They will now confess, that "if God should enter into judgment with them, they could not answer him" for one act, or word, or thought, in their whole lives. Hence they lie before him as sinners under sentence of "death," and cast themselves wholly on the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. Instead of rising against the denunciations of his wrath, as they once did, they are dumb[d]; well knowing that "he will be justified in his sayings, and be clear when he judgeth[e]." Thus from thinking themselves "alive" and pure, "sin revives in them, and they die."]

IMPROVEMENT—

1. How mistaken then are they who imagine that they have no cause to fear the wrath of God!

[We will grant, that, according to the world's estimate, they are very worthy characters: but are they more exemplary than the Apostle Paul was before his conversion? Let them hear his own account of himself, and judge[f]. If then he, when his eyes were opened, saw that he was a "dead" condemned sinner, let not any of us delude ourselves with the idea that we are in any better state — — —]

2. How suited is the Gospel to those who feel their guilt and misery!

[d] Matt. xxii. 12. [e] Ps. li. 4. [f] Phil. iii. 4—6.

[Are we *lost?* it was such persons that Christ came to *seek* and to *save*. Have we nothing to present to God in order to obtain salvation? He requires nothing at our hands, but to receive it freely from him "without money, and without price"———Let "the law then be to us as a schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ;" and let us look to "Christ as the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."]

MDCCCLIV.

SPIRITUAL CONFLICTS OF BELIEVERS.

Rom. vii. 18—23. *I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.*

OF all evils that can be mentioned, Antinomianism is the worst; because it makes the Lord Jesus Christ himself a minister of sin, and turns the most glorious revelation of his grace into an occasion of unrestrained licentiousness. But whilst we reprobate with utter abhorrence the idea of sinning that grace may abound, we dare not, with some, deny or pervert the Gospel of Christ. We must affirm, that the Gospel offers to us a free and full salvation through the blood of Christ, and that they who believe in Christ are altogether dead to the law, so as to have nothing to hope for from its promises, or to fear from its threats. If, from this assertion, any one should infer, that we think ourselves at liberty to violate the precepts of the law, he would be much mistaken. There were some who put this construction on St. Paul's statements; to whom he replied, "Shall we then continue in sin, that grace may abound?" and again, "Shall we then sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace[a]?" To each of these questions he answered,

[a] Rom. vi. 1, 15.

"God forbid:" and in like manner we reject with indignation the remotest idea that we would make the Gospel an occasion of sin.

But, whilst St. Paul vindicated himself from this charge, he shewed, that, as a woman who had lost her husband was at liberty to be married to another man, so the law to which he once owed allegiance being dead, he was at liberty to be married to Christ, and by him to bring forth fruit unto God.

The terms however in which he expressed himself seemed to criminate the law, as much as he had before seemed to cast reflections on the Gospel. "When we were in the flesh, the motions of sins which were by the law did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death[b]." Here, as he had before denied to the law the office of justifying a sinner, so *now, in appearance,* he seemed to accuse it as being to him the author both of sin and death. But these representations also he rejects; and shews, that the law had only been the *occasion* of sin, and not the *cause* of it[c]; and that it had also been the *occasion* of death, but was by no means the *cause* of it[d]. The proper *cause* both of sin and of death was the corruption of our nature, which remains with us even to our dying hour; as he himself could testify by bitter experience. This experience of his he then proceeds to describe. But as commentators have differed widely from each other in their explanations of the passage, we will endeavour to shew,

I. Of whom it is to be understood—

That we may bring the matter to a fair issue, we will distinctly inquire,

1. Does the passage relate the experience of an ungodly man, or of one that is truly pious?

[Those who explain it of an ungodly man say, that the whole preceding chapter represents a true Christian as made free from sin[e]; and that to interpret this passage of a true Christian, would be to make the Apostle contradict himself.

[b] ver. 5. [c] ver. 8.
[d] ver. 13. [e] Rom. vi. 6, 7, 11, 14, 18.

As for the opposition which the person here spoken of makes to his sinful propensities, it is nothing more (say they) than the ordinary conflict between reason and passion; and it may therefore properly be interpreted as experienced by an ungodly man.

But to this we answer, that, though an ungodly man may feel some restraints from his conscience, and consequently some conflicts between reason and passion, he cannot say that he really "hates sin," or that "he delights in the law of God after the inward man[f]." The carnal and unrenewed mind neither is, nor can be, subject to the law of God[g]; it is altogether enmity against God[h]: and therefore the character here drawn cannot possibly be assigned to an ungodly man.]

2. Does St. Paul in this passage personate a godly man who is in a low state of grace, or does he speak altogether of himself?

[That the Apostle does sometimes speak in the person of another, in order that he may inculcate truth in a more inoffensive manner, is certain[i]: but we conceive it to be clear that he speaks here in his own person: for it is undeniable that he speaks in his own person in the preceding part of the chapter, where he tells us what he *was* in his unconverted state[k]: and now he tells us what he *is*, at the time of writing this epistle. In ver. 9. he says "I *was* alive without the law once;" and then afterwards, in ver. 14. he says, "The law is spiritual, but I *am* carnal:" and so he proceeds to the very end of the chapter declaring fully and particularly all the workings of his mind. This change of the tense shews clearly, that from stating his *former* experience he proceeds to state that which he felt at *present*. Moreover, in the concluding verse of the chapter, where he sums up, as it were, the substance of his confession in few words, he particularly declares, that he spake it of *himself*: "So then with the mind *I myself* serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin[l]." And this is yet further evident from what he adds at the beginning of the next chapter, where he says, "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made *me* free from the law of sin and death[m]."

The only thing that can raise a doubt whether the Apostle speaks in his own person or not, is the strong language which

[f] ver. 15, 22. [g] 1 Cor. ii. 14. [h] Rom. viii. 7.
[i] 1 Cor. iv. 6. [k] ver. 7—11.
[l] To interpret αὐτὸς ἐγὼ, "I the same man," i. e. not I *myself*, but I *that other person*, is such a perversion of language as cannot with any propriety be admitted.
[m] Rom. viii. 2.

he uses. It is certainly strong language to say of himself, "I am carnal, sold under sin." But this differs as widely from what is said of Ahab, who "*sold himself* to work iniquity," as the motion of a volunteer differs from the motion of a person who is dragged in chains. To understand the Apostle, we must consider the subject on which he is writing. He is comparing himself with the spiritual and perfect law of God. To fulfil that in its utmost extent, was his continual aim: but by reason of his indwelling corruption he could not attain his aim: and this may well account for the strong terms in which he speaks of his corrupt nature. And, if we compare his language with that which the holiest men that ever existed have used in reference to themselves, we shall find that there is a perfect agreement between them. "Behold, I am vile!" says Job; "I repent and abhor myself in dust and ashes." David also complains, "My soul cleaveth to the dust." And the Prophet Isaiah, on being favoured with a vision of the Deity himself, exclaimed, "Woe is me, I am undone! I am a man of unclean lips." And it is a fact, that the most eminent saints in every age have felt a suitableness in the language of St. Paul to express their own experience, just as they have also in those expressions of our Liturgy, "We are tied and bound with the chain of our sins; but do thou, O Lord, of the pitifulness of thy great mercy, loose us!"]

Having shewn that the passage relates the Apostle's own experience, we will proceed to shew,

II. Its true import—

The Apostle is speaking of that corrupt principle, which, notwithstanding his attainments, still remained within him, and kept him from that perfect conformity to the law of God to which he aspired. This principle he represents as having the force of a law, which he was not able fully to resist. He had indeed within himself a principle of grace which kept him from ever yielding a willing obedience to his indwelling corruption; but it did not so free him from the workings of corruption, but that he still offended God in many things;

1. In a way of occasional aberration—

[To conceive of this subject aright, we may suppose the holy and perfect law of God to be a perfectly straight line on which we are to walk; and the corrupt principle within us to be operating on all our faculties to turn us from it. Sometimes it blinds the understanding, so that we do not distinctly see

the line: sometimes it biasses the judgment, so as to incline us, without any distinct consciousness on our part, to smaller deviations from it: sometimes with force and violence it impels the passions, so that we cannot regulate our steps with perfect self-command: and sometimes it operates to delude the conscience, and to make us confident that we see the line, when in reality it is only a semblance of it, which our great adversary has presented to our imagination in order to deceive us. By this principle a continual warfare was kept up in his soul against his higher and better principle, keeping him from what was good, and impelling him to what was evil; so that he often did what he would not willingly have done, and did not what he gladly would have done. Thus, as he expresses it, there was "a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin in his members." This representation exactly accords with that which he gives of every child of God, in the Epistle to the Galatians: "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would[n]."

This is by no means to be understood as though he acknowledged that he was driven to any gross violations of God's law; for with respect to them he had a conscience void of offence: but in respect of smaller deviations from the exact line of duty, he could not assert his innocence: he felt, that however much he longed for perfection, "he had not yet attained, nor was he already perfect."]

2. In a way of constant defect—

[The law of God requires that we should love God with *all* our heart, and *all* our mind, and *all* our soul, and *all* our strength; and that *every* action, *every* word, *every* thought, be in perfect accordance with this rule. But who has not reason to confess that his very best duties are defective, in *extent*, in *intensity*, and in *continuance*? Who comprehends in any one action *all* that assemblage of nicely-balanced motives, and purposes, and affections, that were combined in the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ? Who at any time feels *all* that ardour in the service of his God which the angels in heaven feel? Or, supposing he did at some highly-favoured season serve God on earth precisely as the glorified saints are serving him in heaven, who must not confess that it is not *always* thus with him? However "willing his spirit may be, he will find that his flesh is weak." Indeed, in proportion as any man aspires after perfection, he will lament his imperfections; and in proportion as he sees the beauty of holiness, he will lothe himself for his

[n] Gal. v. 17.

defects: and we doubt not but that St. Paul's spirituality of mind led him to complain more bitterly of the defects, which, with all his exertions, he was not able to prevent, than he would have done in his unconverted state of more plain and palpable transgressions. It might be supposed that the more holy any man was, the more free he would be from such complaints: but the very reverse of this is true: the persons "who have received the first-fruits of the Spirit, are they who groan most within themselves for their complete redemption[o];" yea Paul himself, as long as he was in the body, did "groan, being burthened[p]:" to his dying hour he resumed at times that piteous moan, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me[q]?"

St. Paul indeed makes a wide distinction between these sins of infirmity, and wilful sins. Of these (these sins of infirmity) he twice says, "If I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me[r];" that is, my new nature in no respects consents to these sins; nay, the full bent and purpose of my soul is against them; but the remainder of my in-dwelling corruption, which I hate and oppose to the uttermost, keeps me from attaining that full perfection that I pant after: and therefore I hope that God will accept my services, notwithstanding the imperfection that attends them. In like manner, we, if we have the testimony of our consciences that we *allow* no sin, but fight against it *universally*, and with all our might, may rest assured, that "God will not be extreme to mark what is done amiss," but that our services, notwithstanding their imperfection, shall come up with acceptance before him.]

In considering this experience of the Apostle, we must especially attend to,

III. The improvement to be made of it—

We may LEARN from it,

1. How constantly we need the atonement and intercession of Christ—

[It is not for the sins only of our unconverted state that we need a Saviour, but for those of daily incursion, even for those which attend our very best services. As Aaron of old was to bear the iniquity of the people of Israel, even of "their holy things[s]," so our great High-Priest must bear ours: nor can the best service we ever offered unto God be accepted of him, till it has been washed in the Redeemer's blood, and perfumed with

[o] Rom. viii. 23. [p] 2 Cor. v. 2, 4. [q] ver. 24.
[r] Compare ver. 17, 20. [s] Exod. xxviii. 38.

the incense of his intercession[t]. Guard then against all conceit of *meriting* any thing at the hands of God: guard also against self-complacency, as though you had wrought some good work in which no flaw can be found. If God were to lay a line and plummet to your best deeds, there would be found inconceivable obliquities and defects in them[u]. Be sensible of this, and then you will learn how to value the Pearl of great price, even the Lord Jesus Christ, for whom you will gladly part with all that you have, that you may obtain an interest in him and in his salvation.]

2. What reason we have to watch over our own hearts—

[Carrying about with us such a corrupt nature, and knowing, as we do, that even St. Paul himself could not altogether cast off its influence, how jealous should we be, lest we be led into the commission of iniquity, even whilst we imagine that we are doing God service! Even the Apostles of our Lord, on more occasions than one, "knew not what spirit they were of:" and we, if we will look back on many transactions of our former lives, shall view them very differently from what we once did: and no doubt God at this moment forms a very different estimate of us from what we are disposed to form of ourselves. How blinded men are by pride, or prejudice, or interest, or passion, we all see in those around us. Let us be aware of it in ourselves: let us remember, that we too have a subtle adversary, and a deceitful heart: let us never forget, that Satan, who beguiled Eve in Paradise, can now "transform himself into an angel of light" to deceive us, and to "corrupt us from the simplicity that is in Christ." Let us pray earnestly to God to keep us from his wiles, to disappoint his devices, and to bruise him under our feet. If God keep us, we shall stand; but, if he withdraw his gracious influences for one moment, we shall fall.]

3. What comfort is provided for us, if only we are upright before God—

[If we wish to make the Apostle's experience a cloak for our sins, we shall eternally ruin our own souls. His experience can be of no comfort to us, unless we have the testimony of our own consciences that we "hate evil," of whatsoever kind it be, and "delight in the law of God," even in its most refined and elevated requirements, "after our inward man." But, if we can appeal to God, that we do not regard or retain willingly any iniquity in our hearts, but that we unfeignedly endeavour to pluck out the right eye that offends our God, then may we

[t] 1 Pet. ii 5. [u] Isai. xxviii. 17. Ps. cxxx. 3.

take comfort in our severest conflicts. We may console ourselves with the thought that "no temptation has taken us but what is common to man," and that "God will, with the temptation, make for us also a way to escape." We may go on with confidence, assured of final victory; and may look forward with delight to that blessed day, when sin and sorrow shall depart from us, and death itself be swallowed up in everlasting victory.]

MDCCCLV.

PAUL'S SPIRITUAL CONFLICTS.

Rom. vii. 24, 25. *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

THE Epistle to the Romans, as a clear, full, argumentative, and convincing statement of the Gospel salvation, far exceeds every other part of Holy Writ. And the seventh chapter of that epistle equally excels every other part of Scripture, as a complete delineation of Christian experience. The Psalms contain the breathings of a devout soul, both in seasons of trouble and under the impressions of joy. But in the passage before us the Apostle states the operation of the two principles which were within him, and shews how divine grace and his corrupt nature counteracted each other. The good principle did indeed liberate him from all allowed subjection to sin: but the corrupt principle within him yet exerted such power, that, in spite of all his endeavours to resist it, he could not utterly overcome it. Having opened thus all the secret motions of his heart, he gives vent to the feelings which had been alternately excited by a review of his own experience, and of the provision which was made for him in Jesus Christ.

In discoursing upon his words we shall shew,

I. The Apostle's experience—

We shall not enter into the general contents of this chapter, but confine ourselves to the workings of the Apostle's mind, in,

1. His views of his sin—

[*He considered sin as the most lothesome of all objects.* In calling his indwelling corruption "a body of death," he seems to allude to the practice of some tyrants, who fastened a dead body to a captive whom they had doomed to death, and compelled him to bear it about with him till he was killed by the offensive smell. Such a nauseous and hateful thing was sin in the Apostle's estimation. He felt that he could not get loose from it, but was constrained to bear it about with him whereever he went: and it was more lothesome to him than a dead body, more intolerable than a putrid carcass.

The bearing of this about with him was an occasion of the deepest sorrow. Whatever other tribulations he was called to endure, he could rejoice and glory in them, yea, and thank God who had counted him worthy to bear them. But under the burthen of his indwelling corruptions he cried, "O wretched man that I am!"

Nor was there any thing he so much desired as to be delivered from it. When he had been unjustly imprisoned by the magistrates, he was in no haste to get rid of his confinement: instead of availing himself of the discharge they had sent him, he said, "Nay, but let them come themselves and fetch me out." But from his indwelling sin he was impatient to be released; and cried, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Not that he was at a loss where to look for deliverance; but he spake as one impatient to obtain it.]

2. His views of his Saviour—

[If his afflictions abounded, so did his consolations abound also. He knew that there was a sufficiency in Christ both of merit to justify the guilty, and of grace to sanctify the polluted. He knew, moreover, that God for Christ's sake had engaged to pardon all his sins, and to subdue all his iniquities. Hence, with an emotion of gratitude, more easy to be conceived than expressed, he breaks off from his desponding strains, and exclaims, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord;" I thank him *for* Christ, as an all-sufficient Saviour; and I thank him *through* Christ, as my all-prevailing Advocate and Mediator. While he saw in himself nothing but what tended to humble him in the dust, he beheld in Christ and in God as reconciled to him through Christ, enough to turn his sorrow into joy, and his desponding complaints into triumphant exultation.]

That we may not imagine these things to be peculiar to St. Paul, we proceed to shew,

II. Wherein our experience must resemble his—

"As face answers to face in a glass, so doth the heart of man to man:" and every one who is converted to God will resemble the Apostle,

1. In an utter abhorrence of all sin—

[Sin is really hateful to all who see it in its true colours; it is properly called, "filthiness of the flesh and spirit[a]:" and all who feel its workings within them, will "lothe both it, and themselves on account of it, notwithstanding God is pacified towards them[b]. Ungodly men may indeed hate sin *in others;* as Judah did, when he sentenced his daughter Tamar to death for the crime in which he himself had borne a share[c]; and as David did, when he condemned a man to die for an act, which was but a very faint shadow of the enormities which he himself had committed[d]. Ungodly men may go so far as to hate sin *in themselves,* as Judas did when he confessed it with so much bitterness and anguish of spirit; and as a woman may who has brought herself to shame; or a gamester, who has reduced his family to ruin. But it is not sin that they hate, so much as the consequences of their sin. The true Christian is distinguished from all such persons in that he hates sin itself, independent of any shame or loss he may sustain by means of it in this world, or any punishment he may suffer in the world to come. The Apostle did not refer to any act that had exposed him to shame before men, or that had destroyed his hopes of acceptance with God, but to the inward corruption of which he could not altogether divest himself: and every one that is upright before God will resemble him in this respect, and hold in abhorrence those remains of depravity which he cannot wholly extirpate.

Nor will the true Christian justify himself from the consideration that he cannot put off his corrupt nature: no; he will grieve from his inmost soul that he is so depraved a creature. When he sees how defective he is in every grace, how weak his faith, how faint his hope, how cold his love; when he sees that the seeds of pride and envy, of anger and resentment, of worldliness and sensuality, yet abide in his heart; he weeps over his wretched state, and "groans in this tabernacle, being burthened." Not that this grief arises from fear of perishing, but simply from the consideration that these corruptions defile his soul, and displease his God, and rob him of that sweet fellowship with the Deity, which, if he were more purified from them, it would be his privilege to enjoy.

Under these impressions he will desire a deliverance from sin as much as from hell itself: not like a merchant who casts

[a] 2 Cor. vii. 1. [b] Ezek. xvi. 63.
[c] Gen. xxxviii. 24—26. [d] 2 Sam. xii. 5—7.

his goods out of his ship merely to keep it from sinking, and wishes for them again as soon as he is safe on shore; but like one racked with pain and agony by reason of an abscess, who not only parts with the corrupt matter with gladness, but beholds it afterwards with horror and disgust, and accounts its separation from him as his truest felicity.

Let every one then examine himself with respect to these things, and ask himself distinctly, "Am I like Paul in lothing sin of every kind, and of every degree? Does my grief for the secret remains of sin within me swallow up every other grief? And am I using every means in my power, and especially calling upon God, to destroy sin root and branch?"]

2. In a thankful reliance on the Lord Jesus Christ—

[The hope of every true Christian arises from Christ alone: if he had no other prospect than what he derived from his own inherent goodness, he would despair as much as those who are gone beyond a possibility of redemption. But there is in Christ such a fulness of all spiritual blessings treasured up for his people, that the most guilty cannot doubt of pardon, nor can the weakest doubt of victory, provided he rely on that adorable Saviour, and seek his blessings with penitence and contrition. In him the Apostle found an abundance to supply his want; and from the same inexhaustible fountain does every saint draw water with joy.

And what must be the feelings of the Christian when he is enabled to say of Christ, "This is my friend, this is my beloved?" Must he not immediately exclaim, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!" Must not the very stones cry out against him, if he withhold his acclamations and hosannas? Yes; "to every one that believes, Christ is, and must be, precious." "All that are of the true circumcision will rejoice in him, having no confidence in the flesh." And the deeper sense any man has of his own extreme vileness, the more fervently will he express his gratitude to God for providing a Saviour so suited to his necessities.]

Let us then LEARN from this subject,

1. The nature of vital godliness—

[Religion, as it is experienced in the soul, is not as some imagine, a state of continual sorrow, nor, as others fondly hope, a state of uninterrupted joy. It is rather a mixture of joy and sorrow, or, if we may so speak, it is a joy springing out of sorrow. It is a conflict between the fleshly and spiritual principle*, continually humbling us on account of what is in ourselves, and filling us with joy on account of what is in

* Gal. v. 17.

Christ Jesus. As for those who dream of sinless perfection, I marvel at them. Let them explain their notions as they will, they put away from themselves one-half of the Apostle's experience, and suffer incalculable loss, in exchanging true scriptural humility for Pharisaic pride, and unscriptural self-complacency. The being emptied of all our own imaginary goodness, and being made truly thankful to God for the blessings we receive in and through Christ, is that which constitutes the Christian warfare, and that which alone will issue in final victory.]

2. How little true religion there is in the world—

[We hear every living man complaining at times of troubles, civil, domestic, or personal: and we find every man at times exhilarated on some occasion or other. But we might live years with the generality of men, and never once hear them crying, "O my inward corruptions: what a burthen they are to my distressed soul!" Nor should we see them ever once rejoicing in Christ as their suitable and all-sufficient Saviour. Yea, if we were only to suggest such a thought to them, they would turn away from us in disgust. Can we need any further proof of the prevalence, the general prevalence, of irreligion? May God make use of this indisputable fact for the bringing home of conviction upon all our souls!]

3. What consolation is provided for them who have ever so small a portion of true religion in their hearts—

[Many experience the sorrows of religion without its joys; and they refuse to be comforted because of the ground they have for weeping and lamentation. But if their sins are a just occasion of sorrow, their sorrow on account of sin is a just occasion of joy: and the more they cry, O wretched man that I am, the more reason they have to add, "Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ." Let *this ascription of praise* be our *alternate* effusion now; and ere long it shall be our *only*, and *uninterrupted*, song for ever.]

MDCCCLVI.

THE PRIVILEGE OF TRUE CHRISTIANS.

Rom. viii. 1. *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

TO establish that fundamental doctrine of our religion, the doctrine of justification by faith alone, is

the main scope of this epistle. Having argued the point, and shewn that the objection of its encouraging men to sin, is without any real foundation, the Apostle sums up the whole in the words before us; and declares, as the just inference from his preceding arguments, that the believer in Christ, who acts agreeably to his profession, has nothing to fear from the condemnation of the law.

From this inspired declaration we learn the state, the character, and the privilege of every true Christian—

I. His state—

He is "in Christ Jesus." This is altogether a term peculiar to the New Testament: but it expresses admirably the condition into which the Christian is brought, as soon as he believes in Christ.

He is interested in Christ as his all-sufficient Saviour—

[He has fled to Christ for refuge from the curses of the broken law — — — and has obtained peace with God by faith in his atoning sacrifice — — — Though in himself he deserves nothing but condemnation, he is "accepted in the beloved," and "made an heir of God through Christ."]

He is united to Christ as his living Head—

[Christ is "made Head over all things to the Church." "He is the vine, of which believers are the branches." Every one knows how it is that the branch is nourished and enabled to bear fruit, namely, by its union with the stock, and by sap derived from the root. Thus it is that the believer "receives continually out of the fulness that is in Christ," being, in fact, not only "one body," but also "one spirit, with him" — — —

In a word, the person that is in Christ is one who can say, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength."]

In strict accordance with this is,

II. His character—

"A tree is known by its fruit," as the Christian is by his.

"He walks not after the flesh."

[Notwithstanding he is in Christ, he still carries about with him a corrupt nature, "a body of sin and death." He has yet "the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and incapacitating him to

serve God so well as he could wish. But "he does not *walk after* the flesh;" nor will he "obey it in the lusts thereof." In this respect he is widely different from the ungodly world. *They* affect nothing but the things of time and sense. *He* is not satisfied with any thing which has not a direct reference to eternity — — —]

"He walks after the Spirit"—

[He possesses a new and heavenly principle, under the influence of which he lives: and his conversation is in heaven," "where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God:" nor can any thing please him which does not advance his eternal interests, and tend to the honour of that Saviour who bought him with his blood — — —]

Viewing thus his state and character, we shall not wonder at what is here declared to be,

III. His privilege—

"There is no condemnation to him." We say not, that there is no *desert* of condemnation in him: for he is still a weak and corrupt creature; and there is much "iniquity even in his holiest acts." But "there is no condemnation *now* remaining to him."

[The law curses those only who are under the law. But the believer is "no longer under the law, but under grace;" and consequently, so far as he is concerned, the law is disarmed of its power, and is incapable of inflicting upon him its penalties. As a woman, when her husband is dead, is no longer under his power; so the Christian, now that the law is abrogated, is no longer obnoxious to its sentence[a]. He stands before God perfect in Christ Jesus, yea, "without spot or blemish:" and he has nothing to fear on account of his past infirmities or his present conflicts: for God will carry on the work begun in his soul, and will "perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ" — — —]

ADDRESS—

1. The mere nominal Christian—

[Think not that your observance of a round of duties is any evidence of your acceptance with God. You must be "in Christ" by a living faith, if ever you would be accepted of him; and by virtue derived from him, must be bringing forth to the glory of his name. And, if this be not your state and character, deceive not yourselves, for *the text itself intimates*, that there is condemnation for you, and that

[a] Rom. vii. 4—6.

you have no part or lot with God's believing people. I pray you, lay this matter to heart, and seek, ere it be too late, the blessings purchased for you by the Redeemer of the world———]

2. The over-confident professor—

[Some there are who will pronounce the words of our text with the same unhallowed confidence, as if there were no condemnation awaiting any child of man. But, brethren, your state and character should be tried, before you claim the privilege belonging to God's faithful people. "If ye walk after the flesh, ye shall die," whatever ye may imagine to the contrary: "If ye be Christ's, ye will surely crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts"———]

3. The timid and doubting Christian—

[Some, because they still feel within themselves the workings of corruption, will doubt whether they can by any means belong to Christ. But the very text intimates, that there will yet be the flesh stirring within us; only, that, if we be Christ's, we shall not "*walk after* it." Say then, my dear brethren, do you *find your pleasure* in earthly things? Is it not, rather, painful to you that you cannot more entirely mortify all earthly desires, and find all your comfort in the things of God? I say not this, to encourage or sanction a slothful habit; but I say it in order to "strengthen your hands that hang down," and to shew you, that, if, with Paul, you are constrained to cry, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?" you should also add with him, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."]

MDCCCLVII.

THE GOSPEL FREES MEN FROM SIN AND DEATH.

Rom. viii. 2. *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*

THE world in general account it liberty to give loose to their passions. But such freedom is indeed the sorest bondage to sin and Satan[a]. None possess true liberty but those who are freed by Christ[b]. The state of the demoniacs when healed by Christ resembled theirs[c]. Paul was made a glorious example of it to all ages. He was once under condemnation,

[a] Rom. vi. 16. [b] John viii. 36. [c] Luke viii. 35.

both because he adhered to the covenant of works, and was governed by his own impetuous will: he now rejoiced in a freedom from the sin that he had indulged, and from the curse to which he had subjected himself. "The law of," &c.

We shall first *explain*, and then *improve* the text—

I. Explain it—

It is not needful to state the various interpretations given of the text. We shall adopt that which seems most easy, and agreeable to the context. We will begin with *explaining the terms*. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" is the Gospel covenant, as confirmed to us in Christ, and revealed to us by the Spirit—

[The "Spirit of life" is the Holy Ghost, who is the author and preserver of spiritual life[d]. The "law" of the Spirit is the Gospel as revealed and applied by him: it is called a law because it has all the essential properties of a law[e]: it is often spoken of as a law both by prophets and Apostles[f]: it is said to be the law of the Spirit "in Christ Jesus," because the blessings of the Gospel are treasured up in Christ, confirmed to us through Christ, and received by us from Christ[g].]

"The law of sin and death" may be understood either of the covenant of works or of our indwelling corruption—

[The covenant of works is a "law" to which all are by nature subject: it is called the "law of sin and death," because both sin and death come by that law[h]. Our indwelling corruption also operates as "a law" within us[i]; it invariably hurries us on to "sin and death[k]."]

[d] John iii. 5. Eph. iii. 16.

[e] A law is a precept enforced with sanctions: and such is the Gospel: it is a precept, 1 John iii. 23; and it is enforced with the most encouraging and awful sanctions, Mark xvi. 16.

[f] Isai. ii. 3. Rom. iii. 27.

[g] Col. i. 19. 2 Cor. i. 20. John i. 16.

[h] Without that law there had been no transgression, and, consequently, no sin (which is the transgression of a law); nor death (which is the penalty inflicted for transgression). Compare 1 John iii. 4. Rom. v. 13. 1 Cor. xv. 56. Hence it is called "the ministration of death and of condemnation." 2 Cor. iii. 7, 9.

[i] Rom. vii. 23. [k] Rom. vii. 5.

We shall next *explain the proposition contained in the terms.* The proposition is, that "the Gospel frees us from the curse of the law, and from the dominion of sin"—

[When we embrace the Gospel we cease to be under the covenant of works[l]; we then partake of all the blessings which Christ has purchased for us; we are liberated from the condemnation due to sin[m]; we are freed, through the aid of the Spirit, from the power of sin[n].]

This proposition is to be understood as extending to all believers—

[It is not true with respect to the Apostles only; it was exemplified in all the first converts[o], and is experienced still by every sincere Christian.]

The text thus explained is capable of most useful improvement—

II. Improve it—

It is replete with very important INSTRUCTION—

It shews us the wretched state of every unregenerate man—

[We are all in bondage to "the law of sin and death;" we are justly subjected to the curses of the broken law[p]; we are also led captive by our own corrupt appetites; even St. Paul himself was in this very state[q]. Let us then humble ourselves under a conviction of this truth.]

It declares to us the only method of deliverance from that state—

[It was the Gospel which freed the Apostle. The same will avail for every other person. We must however "obey the Gospel," and receive it as our "law of faith;" we must look for its blessings from Christ through the Spirit. In this way we may all adopt the language of the text in reference to our own happy experience.]

It affords also abundant matter of REPROOF—

It reproves those who despond as though there were no hope for them—

[l] Rom. vi. 14. latter part. [m] Rom. viii. 1.

[n] Rom. viii. 13. and vi. 14. former part.

[o] One hour they were full of guilt and wickedness; the next they were rejoicing in the pardon of their sins, and in the practice of all holy duties. Acts ii. 46, 47.

[p] Gal. iii. 10. [q] Rom. vii. 9.

[Many think their guilt too great to be pardoned, and their lusts too strong to be subdued; but Paul's case was intended to prevent such desponding fears[r]. Let none therefore any more complain like those of old[s]: every one may find encouragement in the power and mercy of God[t].]

It reproves also those who speak against an assurance of faith—

[It would indeed be presumptuous in some to profess an assurance of faith; but God is desirous that all his people should enjoy it[u]; let not any one therefore reprobate it as presumption; let every one rather seek the assurance expressed in the text.]

It may administer COMFORT also to many sincere Christians—

[Many are yet fighting against their manifold corruptions, and because they obtain not a perfect deliverance, they tremble under apprehensions of the divine wrath. But Paul himself bewailed bitterly his indwelling corruption[x]: yet that did not prevent him from rejoicing in the partial freedom he experienced. Let upright souls take comfort from this reflection.]

[r] 1 Tim. i. 16. "ἐν ἐμοὶ πρώτῳ, in me the chief."
[s] Ezek. xxxvii. 11.
[t] Isai. lix. 1.
[u] 1 John v. 13.
[x] Rom. vii. 24.

MDCCCLVIII.

CHRIST THE AUTHOR OF OUR SANCTIFICATION.

Rom viii. 3, 4. *What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

THE necessity of holiness is allowed by all: the means of attaining it are known to few. Christ is regarded as the meritorious cause of our justification before God; but he is not sufficiently viewed as the instrumental cause of our deliverance from sin. He is represented in the Scriptures as "our sanctification," no less than "our wisdom and our righteousness[a]:" and we should do well to direct our attention

[a] 1 Cor. i. 30.

to him more in that view. In the preceding context he is spoken of as delivering his people from condemnation, and many judicious commentators understand the text as referring to the same point: yet, on the whole, it appears more agreeable both to the words of the text, and to the scope of the passage, to understand it in reference to the work of sanctification[b]. St. Paul had just said that "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," that is, the Gospel, "had made him free from the law of sin, as well as of death." He then adds, that on account of the insufficiency of the law to condemn and destroy sin, God had sent his own Son to effect it; and that through his incarnation and death its power should be effectually broken.

From this view of the text, we are led to consider,

I. The end and design of Christ's Mission—

God's desire and purpose was to restore his people to true holiness—

[Sin was the object of his utter abhorrence: it had marred the whole creation: it had entered into heaven itself, and defiled the mansions of the Most High: it had desolated the earth also, and all that dwelt upon it. To remedy the miseries introduced by it, and to root it out from his people's hearts, was a design worthy of the Deity; since, if once they could be brought to "fulfil the righteousness of the law," by walking, in their habitual course of life, no longer after the flesh, but after the Spirit, eternal honour would accrue to him, and everlasting happiness to them.]

The law was not sufficient to effect this—

[The law was indeed perfectly sufficient to direct man, while he remained in innocence: and it was well adapted to reclaim him when he had fallen; because it denounced the wrath of God against every transgression of its precepts, and set forth a perfect rule of duty. But "it was weak through the flesh:" man was deaf, and could not hear its threatenings; dead, and could not execute its commands. Hence, as to any practical effects, it spake in vain.]

God therefore, in order that his purpose might not fail, sent his only dear Son—

[b] See Doddridge on the place.

[He sent his co-equal, co-eternal Son, "in the likeness of sinful flesh," and to be a sacrifice "for sin[c];" that, through his obedience unto death, he might "deliver those who had been, and must for ever have continued, subject to bondage." How this expedient was to succeed, will come under our consideration presently: we therefore only observe at present, that it was a plan which nothing but Infinite Wisdom could have devised. It could not have entered into the mind of any finite being, to subject God's only dear Son to such humiliation; to make him a partaker of our nature, with all its sinless infirmities; to substitute him in our place, and, by his vicarious sacrifice, to restore us to the image and favour of God: this does, and must for ever, surpass all finite comprehension.]

But though we cannot fathom all the depths of this mystery, we may shew

II. In what way it is effectual for the end proposed—

We speak not of the way in which the death of Christ obtains our justification, but of the way in which it is instrumental to our sanctification. In reference to this, we say

1. It displays the evil and malignity of sin—

[The evil of sin had been seen in a measure by the miseries which it had introduced, and by the punishment denounced against it in the eternal world. But in what light did it appear, when nothing less than the incarnation and death of Christ was able to expiate its guilt or destroy its power! Let any person behold the agonies of Christ in the garden, or his dereliction and death upon the cross, and then go and think lightly of sin if he can. Surely if men were more habituated to look at sin in this view, they would be filled with indignation against it, and seek incessantly its utter destruction.]

2. It obtains for us power to subdue sin—

[Though man is in himself so weak that he cannot, of himself, even think a good thought, yet through the influence of the Holy Spirit he can "fulfil the righteousness of the law," not perfectly indeed, but so as to walk altogether in newness of life[d]. Now, by the death of Christ the promise of the Spirit is obtained for us; and all who seek his gracious influences, shall obtain them. Thus the axe is laid to the root of sin.

[c] This is the meaning of *περὶ ἁμαρτίας*. See Heb. x. 6. and 2 Cor v. 21.

[d] There is a two-fold fulfilling of the law mentioned in the Scriptures; the one *legal*, the other *evangelical*. Compare Matt. v. 17 with Rom. xiii. 8. and Gal. v. 14.

"The weak is enabled to say, I am strong:" and he, who just before was in bondage to his lusts, now casts off the yoke, and "runs the way of God's commandments with an enlarged heart."]

3. It suggests motives sufficient to call forth our utmost exertions—

[The hope of heaven and the fear of hell are certainly very powerful motives; yet, of themselves, they never operate with sufficient force to produce a willing and unreserved obedience. While the mind is wrought upon by *merely* selfish principles, it will always grudge the price which it pays for future happiness. But let the soul be warmed with the love of Christ, and it will no longer measure out obedience with a parsimonious hand: it will be anxious to display its gratitude by every effort within its reach. "The love of Christ will constrain it" to put forth all its powers; to "crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts," and to "perfect holiness in the fear of God."]

INFER—

1. How vain is it to expect salvation while we live in sin!

[If we could have been saved *in* our sins, can it be conceived that God would ever have sent his own Son into the world to deliver us from them; or that, having sent his Son to accomplish this end, he would himself defeat it, by saving us in our iniquities? Let careless sinners well consider this: and let the professors of religion too, especially those in whom sin of any kind lives and reigns, lay it to heart: for if sin be not "condemned in our flesh," our bodies, and souls too, shall be condemned for ever.]

2. How foolish is it to attack sin in our own strength!

[A bowl, with whatever force it be sent, and however long it may proceed in a right direction, will follow at last the inclination of its bias, and deviate from the line in which it was first impelled. Thus it will be with us under the influence of legal principles: we shall certainly decline from the path of duty, when our corrupt propensities begin to exert their force. Our resolutions can never hold out against them. We must have a new bias; "a new heart must be given us, and a new spirit be put within us," if we would persevere unto the end. Let us not then expect to prevail by legal considerations, or legal endeavours. Let us indeed condemn sin in the purpose of our minds, and sentence it to death: but let us look to

Christ for strength, and maintain the conflict in dependence on his power and grace. Then, though unable to do any thing of ourselves, we shall be enabled to "do all things."]

3. How are we indebted to God for sending his only Son into the world!

[If Christ had never come, we had remained for ever the bond-slaves of sin and Satan. We had still continued, like the fallen angels, without either inclination or ability to renew ourselves: whereas, through him, many of us can say, that we are "made free from the law of sin and death." Let us then trace our deliverance to its proper source; to the Father's love, the Saviour's merit, and the Spirit's influence. And let us with unfeigned gratitude adore that God, who "sent his Son to bless us, in turning away every one of us from our iniquities[e]."]

[e] Acts iii. 26.

MDCCCLIX.

THE CARNAL AND THE SPIRITUAL MAN COMPARED.

Rom. viii. 5. *They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.*

IT is a certain and blessed truth, that all who believe in Christ are delivered from the condemnation due to their sins. But it is no less true, that all who believe in Christ are delivered also from the dominion of sin, and are enabled to walk in the paths of righteousness and holiness: and it is only by men's attainment of this latter state that their attainment of the former can be ascertained. At the time that men believe in Christ, they have a new and spiritual principle infused into them by the Spirit of God: and where that principle exists, it will of necessity manifest itself by its appropriate operations. Hence the carnal and the spiritual man may be clearly distinguished from each other. Each will follow the predominant principle by which he is actuated: "They that are after the flesh, will mind the things of the flesh; and they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit."

That the two characters may the more clearly appear, I will set them before you,

I. In a distinct and separate view—

The carnal man will follow carnal things—

[There is in man, by nature, a carnal principle only. Whatever be his feelings, or whatever his pursuits, he is influenced by no other principle than that which he has in common with the whole human race: and the objects of his pursuit are such only as that principle affects. In a word, he seeks nothing beyond the things of time and sense. Pleasure, riches, honour, are, in his estimation, the great sources of happiness to man; and they alone are deemed worthy of his attention. His pleasures may be more or less refined; but, whether they be of an intellectual or corporeal nature, his end in pursuing them is the gratification of his own taste. As in the animal creation there is a diversity of pursuit, but the same end; so in men one may affect the sports of the field, another the indulgence of his appetites and passions, and another the investigations of science; but still self-pleasing is alike the principle of all. So also, in the pursuit of riches or honour, the immediate efforts of men will be suited to the sphere in which they move: but the king upon a throne, and the beggar upon a dunghill, however wide asunder the objects of their pursuit may be, will be wrought upon in the same way by the things which appear to be within their reach, and will shew that they are alike under the influence of a principle that is purely carnal. Even in the things which have respect to religion, a carnal man will still feel no higher principle than *self:* self-seeking, self-pleasing, self-righteousness, and self-dependence, will be found at the root of all that he does in waiting upon God. He has no real delight in any religious exercise; and all his conformity to religious observances is a mere tribute to *self*, rather than to God: it is a price paid for self-esteem, and for the esteem of those around him.]

The spiritual man, on the other hand, will follow spiritual things—

[There is in him, as we have said, a principle infused into his soul by the Spirit of God, and operating to the production of a new and spiritual life. The person who has received this new nature will affect objects and employments suited to it. Acceptance with God will be the first great object of his pursuit. In comparison of this, nothing under heaven will be of any value. The care of the soul will be, in his estimation, the one thing needful. Hence he will devote much time to reading the Scriptures and to prayer. The great work of

repentance will now occupy his mind; and the Lord Jesus Christ will be endeared to him as the Saviour of the world. There will be between him and the carnal man the same difference as existed between the whole and the sick in the days of our Lord. The whole beheld him with mere curiosity: the sick flocked around him with a determination to obtain, if possible, the healing of their diseases. The spiritual man is in pursuit of heaven, as begun on earth, and perfected in glory: and, like a man in a race, or in a conflict, he engages with all his might, if by any means he may obtain the prize of his high calling. Even in his earthly engagements he bears in mind his great object, and endeavours to make even temporal pursuits subservient to his attainment of it. He considers his responsibility to God, and acts in every thing with a reference to his great account.]

But, that we may render the distinction between the two characters more clear, it will be proper to consider them,

II. In a combined and contrasted view—

Take both the characters, and consider them,

1. In their judgment—

[A carnal man may feel a general approbation of religion; but he does not regard it as of paramount importance. What he allows to religion, he rather *concedes* from necessity, than *claims* as its unquestionable due. He will conform to religion so far as his temporal interests will admit of it: but where the two come seriously in competition with each other, the world will have a decided preponderance in its favour. The good opinion of men will limit his exertions for God; and the attainment of some earthly object be prosecuted in preference to the best interests of his soul. To attend to the interests of time and sense will be esteemed by him as of the first necessity; and his spiritual welfare will be subordinated to it.

The spiritual man, on the other hand, will decidedly declare himself on the side of God and of religion. He will not neglect his earthly duties; for he considers them as a part of his duty to God: but if any thing earthly stand in competition with what is heavenly, he hesitates not to which he shall give the preference. The things of time and sense are in his eyes but as the dust upon the balance, in comparison of the things which are invisible and eternal: and in the contemplation of his God and Saviour, he gives this as the deliberate judgment of his mind, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee."]

2. In their will—

[The will of man, for the most part, is determined by his

judgment: for though he may see a better path, and pursue a worse, yet, *at the time*, he wills that which he thinks will, under the existing circumstances, contribute most to his happiness. Hence the carnal man, though he may feel some good desires after religion, and some purpose of heart to seek after it at some future period, determines that he will, for the present, give himself to the prosecution of his earthly objects. Hence, too, he chooses as his associates those who are like-minded with himself, and who can participate with him in his enjoyments. He may know of persons capable of advancing his spiritual welfare: but he has no sympathy with them, nor any desire after their company. Any excess in worldly-mindedness he can forgive and palliate: but any thing that approximates to excess in religious matters is deemed by him an unpardonable offence: and one instance of it will do more to repel him from religion, than ten thousand instances of the opposite habit to deter him from a conformity to the world.

The spiritual man, on the contrary, chooses, with deliberate purpose, his spiritual pursuits; nor will he be deterred from them by any regard to the things of this world. His heart is fixed; and though he finds that the world has yet too great an ascendant over him, he maintains his conflicts with vigour, and becomes daily more dead to the world and more alive to God. He uses diligently, too, the means of spiritual advancement; and takes for his friends and associates those who will help him forward in his heavenly way.]

3. Their affections—

[These invariably are most called forth by the things which most preponderate in the soul. The carnal man accordingly betrays his indifference to spiritual objects by his total want of feeling in relation to them. He may go through his religious observances with constancy; but he rests in them, and never thinks of the way in which his duties have been performed. But, in reference to earthly things, he is alive: his hopes and fears, his joys and sorrows, are called forth, according as he succeeds or fails in the objects of his pursuit. The spiritual man, on the contrary, though not regardless of earthly pursuits, is comparatively unmoved by them; because he is chiefly solicitous that his soul may prosper, and that he may advance in a meetness for his heavenly inheritance. You may find him dejected or happy, without any *visible* cause: but when you inquire into the reasons of his experience, you will find that some change has taken place in his conflicts with sin, or in his sense of the Divine presence, or in his prospects in the eternal world; and, according as these are favourable or not, his soul becomes elevated or depressed; by which he shews that his chief treasure is in heaven.]

APPLICATION—

Take this portion of Holy Writ,

1. As a test whereby to try your state—

[Hitherto I have left unnoticed the peculiar force of the word which the Apostle uses to designate the regard which we feel towards the different objects here spoken of. But the question is, not so much what our external conduct is in relation to them, as what the disposition of our minds is. Which of the two objects do we *savour?* to which does our *taste* lead us? and in which do we find most *enjoyment?* Now, if we will only take notice whither our thoughts lead us, at those seasons when nothing particular has occurred to determine their course, we shall infallibly discover the real bias of our minds: if they run out after any thing that relates to this vain, transient world, we are carnal: if after things spiritual and eternal, we may rank ourselves amongst the number of those who are truly spiritual. The same judgment we may form, by noticing what subjects we most delight to converse about, whether on those which pertain to this life only, or those which relate to the kingdom of our Lord and the interests of our souls. Whatever it be that we most *relish* and and most *delight in*, that is the thing which occupies the chief place in our hearts, and determines us to be either spiritual or carnal, as the case may be. Take, then, this test; and "judge yourselves, that ye be not judged of the Lord."]

2. As a rule whereby to regulate your conduct—

[It is clear, from this passage, what ought to be the constant habit of our lives. We should be growing continually in a deadness to the world, and in a superiority to every thing here below. The great concerns of eternity should more and more occupy our minds; and the whole course of our life should be such as to bear witness to us that we are candidates for heaven. As to this present world, we should consider ourselves as mere pilgrims and sojourners, that have but little interest in any thing around us, and whose chief concern is to pass through it in safety to our destined home.]

MDCCCLX.

THE CARNAL AND SPIRITUAL MIND CONTRASTED.

Rom. viii. 6. *To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

THE world in general are much mistaken with respect to the means of solid happiness. They seek

the vanities of time and sense in hopes of finding satisfaction; and they shun religion under the idea that it would make them melancholy: but the "way of transgressors is hard[a]." On the contrary, the ways of religion afford both peace and pleasure[b]. The testimony of St. Paul respecting this is clear and decisive. His words naturally lead us to consider the difference between the carnal and the spiritual mind,

I. In their operations—

By "the carnal mind" we understand that principle of our fallen nature which affects and idolizes carnal things. The spiritual mind imports that principle which leads the soul to spiritual objects, and is implanted by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the regenerate. The difference between these two principles is discoverable *in our thoughts*—

[The thoughts will naturally be fixed on the objects that are best suited to the reigning principle[c]: to these objects they recur with frequency, fervour, and complacency. If we be under the dominion of a carnal principle, we shall be thinking of some pleasure, profit, honour, or other worldly vanity: if we be led by a spiritual principle, God, and Christ, and the concerns of the soul, will occupy the mind.]

The principles will also operate on *the affections*—

[Whatever we most esteem, we *desire* it when absent, *hope* for if it be attainable, *love* the means of attaining it, and *rejoice* in it when secured. If there be danger of losing it, we *fear;* we *hate* the means that would deprive us of it; and if it be lost, we *grieve.* The carnal mind is thus exercised about carnal objects: the spiritual mind is thus exercised about spiritual objects. Hence that caution given us with respect to the affections[d]—]

The principles will yet further influence our *aims and ends* of action—

[a] Prov. xiii. 15. [b] Prov. iii. 17.

[c] Our occupations in life indeed will give a direction to our minds: a carnal mind may from necessity be conversant about spiritual things, and a spiritual mind about carnal things. Particular occasions also may fix the attention much either on spiritual or carnal objects. But we speak of those seasons only, when the mind is free from pressing engagements, and can fix on the things which it most affects.

[d] Col. iii. 2.

[A carnal man can only act from carnal motives: he will have carnal aims even in spiritual employments[e]. A spiritual man, on the contrary, will act from spiritual motives: he will act with spiritual views even in his temporal concerns. The one will seek his own interest or honour, and the other God's glory[f].]

This difference in the operation of the two principles causes a corresponding difference,

II. In their effects—

The effect of the carnal principle is beyond measure awful—

[This principle reigning in us *proves* us destitute of life; yea, rather, the reign of it is itself *a state* of spiritual "death:" it must moreover terminate in everlasting death. This is irreversibly decreed by God[g]; and it must be so in the very nature of things[h].]

The effect of the spiritual principle is inexpressibly glorious—

[Wherever it prevails, it is a proof of spiritual life: it is also invariably the means of filling the soul with "peace." Nor can it issue otherwise than in eternal life and peace. This also is according to the express constitution of God[i]; and it must be so in the very nature of things[k].]

ADDRESS—

1. The carnal-minded—

[In what a lamentable state are they whose consciences testify that their thoughts, affections, and aims, are altogether carnal! Let it be remembered that it is God who declares this. Who would dare to continue in such a state another day? Let those who feel their misery plead that promise[l]—There is the same grace for them as has been effectual for others.]

2. The spiritual-minded—

[Happy they who are of this description! Let such adore the grace that has caused them to differ from others.

[e] Zech. vii. 5, 6. [f] 1 Cor. x. 31. [g] Gal. vi. 7.

[h] What comfort could a carnal person have in heaven? there are no objects there suited to his inclination; nor has he any delight in the employments of the celestial spirits.

[i] Gal. vi. 8.

[k] Spiritual-mindedness constitutes our meetness for heaven, while it is also an anticipation and foretaste of heaven.

[l] Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

Let them endeavour to improve in spirituality of mind; let them guard against relapses, which will destroy their peace; and let their eyes be fixed upon the eternal state, where their present bliss shall be consummated in glory.]

MDCCCLXI.

VILENESS AND IMPOTENCY OF THE NATURAL MAN.

Rom. viii. 7, 8. *The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*

TO those who know not what is in the heart of man, it must appear strange that persons not very dissimilar in their outward conduct should be adjudged to widely different states in the eternal world. But in the most imperfect of the regenerate, there is a predominant principle of love to God; whereas in the best of unregenerate men there is a rooted enmity against him: and this alone places their characters as far asunder as heaven and hell.

St. Paul has been speaking of the final issues to which a carnal and a spiritual mind will lead: and because it may seem unaccountable that the one should terminate in death, while the other is productive of eternal life and peace, he assigns the reason of it, and shews that the carnal mind is enmity against God, and that a person under its influence is incapable of rendering him any acceptable service.

In the Apostle's words there are three things to be considered;

I. His assertion—

The mind here spoken of, is that which actuates every unregenerate man—

[" The carnal mind" does not necessarily imply a disposition grossly sensual; it is (as it is explained in ver. 5) a savouring of earthly and carnal things in preference to things spiritual and heavenly. And this is the disposition that rules in the heart of every child of man — — —]

This " mind is enmity against God "—

[There is not one of God's perfections, to which this disposition is not averse. It deems his holiness too strict, his justice too severe, his truth too inflexible; and even his mercy itself is hateful to them, on account of the humiliating way in which it is dispensed. Even the very existence of God is so odious to them, that they say in their hearts, "I wish there were no God[a]." He did once put himself into their power; and they shewed what was the desire of their hearts by destroying his life: and, if they could have annihilated his very being, they would, no doubt, have gladly done it.

This mind is not merely inimical to God, for then it might be reconciled; but it is "enmity" itself against him, and must therefore be slain, before the soul can ever be brought to the service and enjoyment of God.]

This assertion, though strong, will not be thought too strong, when we consider,

II. His proof—

The carnal mind "is not subject to the law of God"—

[The law requires that we should love God supremely, and our neighbour as ourselves. But the carnal mind prefers the world before God, and self before his neighbour. There are different degrees indeed, in which a worldly and selfish spirit may prevail; but it has more or less the ascendant over every natural man; nor is there an unregenerate person in the universe who cordially and unreservedly submits to this law.]

It not only is not subject to God's law, but "it cannot be"—

[There is the same contrariety between the carnal mind and the law of God, as there is between darkness and light. It has been shewn before, that the carnal mind is enmity itself against God; and that the very first principle of obedience to the law is *love*. Now how is it possible that enmity should produce love? "We may sooner expect to gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles."

This incapacity to obey the law of God is justly adduced as a proof of our enmity against him: for if we loved him, we should love his will; and if we hate his will, whatever we may pretend, we in reality hate him.]

A due consideration of the Apostle's argument will secure our assent to,

III. His inference—

[a] Ps. xiv. 1.

[We cannot please God but by obeying his law. All external compliances are worthless in his eyes, if not accompanied with the love and devotion of the soul. But such obedience cannot be rendered by the carnal mind; and consequently they who are in the flesh, that is, are under the influence of a carnal mind, "cannot please God:" they may be admired by their fellow-creatures; but whatever they do will be an abomination in the sight of God.

This is so plain, that it scarcely admits of any confirmation: yet it may be confirmed by the Articles of our Church, which plainly and unequivocally speak the same language[b].]

On the whole then we may LEARN, from this subject,

1. The grounds and reasons of the Gospel—

[The principal doctrines of the Gospel have their foundation, not in any arbitrary appointment of the Deity, but in the nature and necessities of man. We must seek reconciliation with God through Christ, because we are "enemies to him in our minds by wicked works." We must seek the renewing influences of the Spirit, because our nature is altogether corrupt, and incapable of either serving or enjoying God. When therefore we hear of the indispensable necessity of being born again, and of the impossibility of being saved except by faith in Christ, let us remember that these are not the dogmas of a party, but doctrines consequent upon our fallen state, and therefore of universal and infinite importance: and that, if we were to be silent on these subjects, we should be unfaithful to our trust, and betray your souls to everlasting ruin.]

2. The suitableness and excellence of its provisions—

[If man were commanded to reconcile himself to God, or to renovate his own nature, he must sit down in despair. Darkness could as soon generate light, as fallen man could effect either of these things. But we are not left without hope: God has provided such a Saviour as we want, to mediate between him and us: and such an Agent as we want, to form us anew after the Divine image. Let us then embrace this Gospel, and seek to experience its blessings. Let us, as guilty creatures, implore remission through the blood of Jesus; and, as corrupt creatures, beg the Holy Spirit to work effectually in us, and to render us meet for a heavenly inheritance.]

[b] Art. X. & XIII.

MDCCCLXII.

THE NECESSITY OF HAVING THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST.

Rom. viii. 9. *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his* [a].

MAN at his first creation was made in the Divine image; God communed with him as a friend, and dwelt in him as a temple: but this harmony was not of long continuance: man sinned; and God in righteous judgment departed from him. Not willing however that his apostate creatures should irrecoverably perish, God sent his Son to make atonement for their sins, and his Spirit to renew their natures, that so they might be restored to his favour, and rendered meet for the inheritance they had forfeited. It is of this Spirit that the Apostle speaks in the text, and declares that we must have him dwelling in us if we would belong to Christ. We might understand the Spirit as referring to the *disposition* of Christ; but that the context evidently confines its import to that blessed Spirit, who "raised up Christ from the dead, and will in due time raise up us also." He is called "the Spirit of God," and "the Spirit of Christ," because Christ is God, and the Spirit acts as his deputy. We propose to shew,

I. That we *may* have the Spirit—

By "having the Spirit" we do not mean, that we are to have those *common* operations of the Spirit, which the most ungodly men both experience and resist [b] (for then the Apostle's assertion would be frivolous in the extreme;) nor do we mean those *miraculous* powers, which were given in the apostolic age (for many, who were Christ's, never received those powers; and many exercised those powers who never belonged to Christ [c];) but we mean those *special* influences of the Spirit, whereby men are enlightened,

[a] This is retained as being totally different from those which follow, and as being useful to any one who may wish to see a more concise view of the subject

[b] Gen. vi. 3. Isai. lxiii. 10.

[c] Matt. vii. 22, 23.

and transformed into the Divine image. In this sense we affirm that we *may* have the Spirit of Christ—

[*In the first ages of Christianity, not a few individuals only, but whole Churches received the influences of which we speak.* St. Paul prayed that the whole Church at Ephesus might have "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ;" and that they might be "renewed by the Spirit in their inward man[d]:" and, speaking of the Christian Church at large, he especially ascribes their attainments to the operations of the Holy Ghost; "Not by works of righteousness which we have done," says he, "but according to his mercy God hath saved us, by the washing of regeneration and *renewing of the Holy Ghost*[e]." Now if the whole Christian Church received the Spirit of Christ formerly, why should not *we* at this day? Is our strength so much greater than theirs, or the work of sanctification so much easier, that we do not need the same Divine assistance? or, when the Apostle said, "The promise of the Spirit is to you, and to your children, and *to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call*[f]," did he mean to limit the gift of the Spirit to the apostolic age? But *why do the Scriptures speak so much respecting our having the Spirit?* They teach us to pray for it[g]; they promise it to us[h]; they require us to make use of it and depend upon it in all holy exercises, "to live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, pray in the Spirit[i]." Would all this be spoken if we were not to expect the Holy Spirit? *Why, in the Liturgy of our Church, do we so often pray for "the inspiration of the Holy Spirit* that we may think those things that be good, and for his merciful guidance that we may perform the same[k]?" Did those holy men who compiled our Liturgy think that we had no just reason to expect the influences of God's Spirit? Is it enthusiasm for us to expect what all the first Christians had, what the Scriptures require us to have, and what we ourselves continually pray for? If we use these prayers with sincerity, the world will call us enthusiasts; but we had better be accounted enthusiasts by man, than hypocrites by God.

We should need to apologize for arguing so plain a point, if the daring infidelity of the age did not render it, alas! too necessary.]

We must carry our assertion still further, and say,

II. That we *must* have the Spirit—

[d] Eph. i. 17. and iii. 16 [e] Tit. iii. 5, 6.
[f] Acts ii. 38, 39. [g] Luke xi. 13. [h] John vii. 37—39.
[i] Gal. v. 25. Jude, ver. 20.
[k] See the Collect for the fifth Sunday after Easter; and for Whitsunday; and the first in the Communion Service.

The aid of God's Spirit is necessary in order to our being Christ's: without it,

We cannot know Christ—

[By nature, we are altogether blind to spiritual things. We are assured on most unquestionable authority, that "the natural man accounts the things of the Spirit to be foolishness, and that he not only does not receive, but *cannot know* them, because they are spiritually discerned[l]." And, with respect to the knowledge of Christ in particular, our Lord tells us that, as no man knoweth the Father but the Son, so no man knoweth the Son but the Father, and he to whom God shall be pleased to reveal him[m]. The Spirit of God must "take of the things that are Christ's and shew them unto us;" he must "open our understandings to understand them;" and unless he "guide us into all truth," we shall wander in the mazes of ignorance and error to the latest period of our lives, and "perish at last through lack of knowledge."]

We cannot resemble Christ—

[We have altogether lost the image of God; nor can we ever recover it by any power of our own. That image consists in righteousness and true holiness, not the smallest part of which we can obtain without the Spirit. If we would not go on fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, we must walk in the Spirit[n]: if we would mortify the deeds of the body, it must be through the Spirit[o]: if we would have our trials sanctified, it must be through a supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ[p]: if we would "wait for the hope of righteousness by faith, it must be through the Spirit[q]." There is not any single grace which can be produced by any other means; they are all fruits of the Spirit[r]: and as long as any man continues destitute of the Spirit, he must of necessity continue earthly and sensual[s]. He, and he alone, can give us either to will or to do any good thing[t]. Now is holiness necessary in order that we may resemble Christ; and is every part of holiness, both root and branch, the produce of God's Spirit; and can any one doubt whether it be necessary for us to have the Spirit?]

We cannot enjoy Christ—

[We have not naturally any taste for spiritual enjoyments; we affect the things of time and sense, and those only. Indeed, how is it possible that we should enjoy him whom we do not know? Or how can his love be shed abroad in our hearts but

[l] 1 Cor. ii. 14. [m] Matt. xi. 27. [n] Gal. v. 16.
[o] Rom. viii. 13. [p] Phil. i. 19. [q] Gal. v. 5.
[r] Gal. v. 22, 23. [s] Jude, ver. 19. [t] Phil. ii. 13.

by the Spirit[u]? If any one think he can enjoy Christ by any power of his own, let him only make the experiment; let him retire to his closet for one hour, and say, 'I will spend this hour in the enjoyment of Christ; I will delight myself in him with my whole heart:' let him make the attempt, and he shall soon be undeceived by the most convincing of all arguments, his own experience: nor are we afraid to rest the whole argument upon the issue of such a trial. Nor can we enjoy Christ *hereafter* any more than we can in this world, if we be not prepared for it by the Spirit of God. There is a "meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light" which we must have, before we can find comfort in the presence of our Lord. What pleasure could we take in him whom we do not at all resemble? "What communion could light have with darkness, or Christ with Belial[x]?" We find that even now, when our corruptions are so restrained, one single hour is irksome, if spent in spiritual exercises; and we may be sure we could not bear to be occupied without intermission to all eternity in those duties, for which we have no inclination, yea, from which we are most exceedingly averse.

But let one asseveration of the true and faithful Witness stand in lieu of ten thousand arguments; Ye MUST be born again, says our Lord; and that, not of water only, but of the Spirit; or else ye can never enter into the kingdom of God[y].]

We shall endeavour to IMPROVE this subject,

1. By a general inquiry—

[Have *we* the Spirit; or are we yet destitute of his gracious influences? Some think this a needless inquiry, and one which cannot be satisfactorily resolved. But can we "be brought out of darkness into marvellous light," and be "turned from the power of Satan unto God," without knowing that we have experienced some change? St. Paul supposes such ignorance to be inconsistent with saving conversion to God: he asks, "Know ye not that your bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost[z]?" and again, "Know ye not how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates[a]?" Now here he not only declares that we are reprobates if we have not the Spirit of God, but considers this truth as known and acknowledged by all true Christians. Inquire then, whether you have been enlightened, renewed and sanctified by the Spirit of God, and whether you are yet daily experiencing his powerful operations? Let not this matter hang in suspense, lest you be found reprobates and sons of perdition, when you are fancying yourselves saints, and heirs of glory.]

[u] Rom. v. 5. [x] 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15. [y] John iii. 5—7.
[z] 1 Cor. vi. 19. [a] 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

2. By a particular address—

[Let *those, whose consciences testify that they have not the Spirit,* stand convicted and condemned. The text speaks of all such without exception; "if *any man,*" &c. Let it be remembered that, however cultivated our minds may be with human literature, and however amiable our natural dispositions, we must have the Spirit of Christ, or we can be none of his. And what a dreadful state is this! for if we be not Christ's, whose are we? It must be said to us, as our Lord said to the Jews, "Ye are of your Father, the devil." And are any of us willing to be disclaimed by Jesus in the day of judgment? Would we that he should *then* say to us, "Ye are none of mine?" If not, let us now seek his good Spirit, and live henceforth under his influence and direction.

But let *those, who have reason to believe that they have the Spirit,* rejoice. *They* are Christ's: they are his friends; they are the very members of his body; they are "his portion, the lot of his inheritance." O happy, happy souls, how highly privileged even now! and how unspeakably blessed in the future world! Be not afraid then of the scoffs of an ungodly world; let them curse, if God do but bless. Improve your present privileges: be careful lest by any means ye "grieve the Holy Spirit whereby ye are sealed:" look to him more and more to comfort and transform your souls; and expect with patience that blessed period, when Christ shall acknowledge you before the assembled universe, and number you among his jewels in the day that he shall count them up[b].]

[b] Mal. iii. 17.

MDCCCLXIII.

THE OFFICES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Rom. viii. 9. *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

ON a remote occasion, similar to the present, I endeavoured to set forth in this place, the law; and, on a subsequent occasion, the Gospel. These two subjects, taken together, form a whole, so far as relates to Christianity *as a system.* But for the full developement of our holy religion *in its spiritual operations and practical results,* the office of the Holy Spirit should be separately and distinctly considered. This part, therefore, it is now my intention to supply.* But, in entering on a subject so deeply mysterious as

* Preached before the University of Cambridge, in November, 1831.

this, I may well ask, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Besides, in reference to it, there is a still further ground of discouragement, arising from the opposition which the subject itself meets with in the human mind. To a person who has never experienced any thing of a work of grace upon his own heart, the work of the Spirit appears to be little better than an enthusiastic conceit; and when pressed upon his conscience as a matter to be experienced at the peril of his soul, it excites, I had almost said, a feeling of indignation, inasmuch as it requires of him a greater degree of submission to God than he is willing to yield, and a closer intercourse with God than he has any inclination to attain.

I think this admits of an easy illustration. It is an indisputable fact, that we are, by nature, altogether alienated from the life of God. Now we all feel, that, when alienated from a fellow-creature, however we may bear with him in a crowd, we are indisposed to have much personal intercourse with him alone. So, also we feel in reference to God. We can hear of him at a distance, and not be disturbed; but, by reason of our alienation from him, we are averse to be brought into very near communion with him. We can bear with a display of his perfections *in the universe*, because, though we see him *as our Creator*, he is not sufficiently near us to exercise any material controul over us: but when he is brought nigh to us *in the law*, as *our Governor*, we feel somewhat of a painful constraint, because of our responsibility to him, and the account we must one day give of ourselves to him at his tribunal. Let him then be brought still nearer to us *in the Gospel*, as *our incarnate and suffering God*, and our inquietude is proportionably increased; because we are made to realize more deeply the terrors of his wrath, which demanded such a sacrifice, and the personal obligation which lies upon us to surrender up ourselves unreservedly to him. But, in the offices and operations of the Holy Spirit, we are led to view him, not merely as *God, in the universe*, displaying himself *around us;* or

as *God, in his Church,* declaring his will *to us;* or as *God, in our nature,* interposing *for us;* but as *God, in our hearts,* dwelling and operating *in us:* and this brings him into such immediate contact with us, and requires of us such a minute attention to all our ways, that we shrink back from every part of the subject, and, for the pacifying of our own minds, cast reflections upon it as visionary, unintelligible, absurd. I do not mean to say that there is in the minds of men a distinct consciousness of such a process, but only that there is in reality such a process in the human mind, though men are not exactly aware of it. Men do not like to have God too near to them; and the nearer he is brought to them, the more they shew their aversion to that which is the means of presenting him to their minds. Under such circumstances, I scarcely know how to enter upon the work which I have undertaken. Indeed I am strongly reminded of the feelings of St. Paul himself, when, in reference to his ministrations at Corinth, he said, "I was among you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling[a]." Yet, from so interesting a subject, especially whilst I judge it necessary to complete the plan which I had originally proposed, I dare not draw back. The importance of it will plead my apology, if any apology be required for "declaring to you the whole counsel of God." Indeed, we need go no further than to the words of my text, to see the inconceivable importance of the subject which I am bringing before you. What! If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his!" What can this mean? Who is this "Spirit?" What is it to "have" him? Why is the having him so indispensable to my welfare? What must I do in order that I may get possession of him? And what must become of me, if I possess him not?—I say, to any man that has the least concern about his soul, these thoughts must force themselves with an overwhelming power upon his mind. And it is in the hope that God may in his tender mercy make use of me, for the exciting and

[a] 1 Cor. ii. 3.

the satisfying of these inquiries, that I now address myself to this deep and comprehensive subject. But let me entreat, not only your candour, (for of that I am, from long and uniform experience, well assured,) but your prayers, also, that God may enable me so to speak, as to approve myself to him; and enable you so to hear, that you may derive eternal benefit to your souls; so that both "I who sow, and you who reap, may rejoice together in heaven for evermore."

For the unfolding of the subject I shall endeavour to shew, distinctly and separately in my four discourses,—

I. Who is that Spirit whom all of us as Christians are expected to possess.

II. Why the possessing of that Spirit is indispensable to our being Christ's accepted followers.

III. What that Spirit will work in us in order that we may be Christ's.

IV. What he will work in us when we are Christ's.

And, whilst I speak, may "the word go forth with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven," and "come in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" to the hearts of all who hear me[b]!

I. Who is that Spirit whom all of us as Christians are expected to possess. The Holy Spirit here spoken of is the Third Person of the ever-blessed Trinity. As such he is set forth in the ordinance of baptism, which is administered in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost[c]. And as such he is addressed in that benediction uttered by St. Paul, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen[d]." In both these passages his distinct personality is recognised, and his proper deity acknowledged. Had he been a mere *quality*, as some have imagined, it is not to be

[b] 1 Pet. i. 12. 1 Cor. ii. 4. [c] Matt xxviii. 19.
[d] 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

conceived that his name would have been united with that of the Father and of the Son in these solemn acts of worship. But, in fact, the whole Scriptures bear witness to him as *God*, equally with the Father and the Son. Ananias, "in lying to the Holy Ghost, lied unto *God*[e]." And we, in being his temples, are the temples of the living *God*[f]. But, whilst in his essential Godhead he is equal with the Father and the Son, in his office he is inferior to them both, and acts, if I may so say, a subordinate part under the Gospel dispensation. And this accounts for his being called *The Spirit of the Father*[g], and *The Spirit of the Son*[h], under which latter designation we are this time called more particularly to consider him.

My text says, "If any man have not *the Spirit of Christ*, he is none of his." Now it is of importance to ascertain, why this name is given to the Holy Spirit. I conceive that the following reasons may fitly be assigned for it. He is so called, I apprehend,

1. Because of his peculiar agency in reference to Christ himself.

2. Because of his subserviency to Christ in the economy of redemption.

3. Because of its being his special office to glorify Christ.

He is called *The Spirit of Christ*, 1st, *because of his peculiar agency in reference to Christ himself.* It was he who formed the human nature of Christ in the Virgin's womb. Mary was told by the angel Gabriel, that she should conceive in her womb, and bring forth a son, and call his name Jesus: and, on her inquiring of him how that saying of his should be accomplished, seeing that she was a virgin, the angel answered her, saying, "*The Holy Ghost* shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore, also, that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God[i]."

[e] Acts v. 3, 4.
[f] 1 Cor. iii. 17. with vi. 19.
[g] Matt. x. 20. John xv. 26.
[h] Gal. iv. 6.
[i] Luke i. 35.

The endowments of the Lord Jesus for his heavenly commission were also communicated to him from the same source; as the Prophet Isaiah very distinctly foretold: "*The Spirit of the Lord God* shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and of might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord, and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord[k]." Indeed our Lord himself, when entering upon his ministerial office, purposely referred to another passage in the same prophet, expressive of the same truth, and declared to his audience, that that very Scripture was then fulfilled in their ears: "*The Spirit of the Lord* is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord[l]."

The solemn consecration also of the Lord Jesus to his office at the time of his baptism, was visibly attested and confirmed by this same divine Agent: "*The Holy Ghost* descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him; and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased[m]."

Further, it was "*by the Spirit* that he was led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil[n];" and by that same Spirit, was enabled to vanquish that mighty foe; as our Lord himself declared: "If I cast out devils *by the Spirit of God*, then the kingdom of God is come unto you[o]." By the same divine Agent also was he assisted in offering himself a sacrifice upon the cross; for "*through the eternal Spirit*, he offered himself without spot to God[p]:" by him also was he afterwards raised up from the grave, to which his crucified body had been consigned: "He was put to death in the flesh, but *quickened by the Spirit*[q]."

[k] Isai. xi. 2, 3. [l] Luke iv. 18, 19. with Isai. lxi. 1, 2.
[m] Luke iii. 22. [n] Matt. iv. 1. [o] Matt. xii. 28
[p] Heb. ix. 14. [q] 1 Pet. iii. 18.

Now, as ministering thus to the Lord Jesus, from the first moment of his existence to the period of his restoration from the grave, the Holy Ghost is peculiarly entitled to the name given him in my text, "The Spirit of Christ."

But this name further pertains to him on account of *his subserviency to Christ in the economy of redemption.* Christ, as Mediator, was sent by the Father, and acted in all things as a servant to his Father[r], doing nothing, and speaking nothing, but in accordance with the Father's will, and in obedience to the Father's commands. He himself says, "I have not spoken of myself; but the Father who sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak[s]." And precisely thus did the Lord Jesus Christ send the Holy Ghost to effect *his* will. It was by the Holy Ghost that Christ spake in the ministry of Noah to the antediluvian world[t], and instructed all his people in the wilderness[u]. It was by the Holy Ghost that he moved the prophets in succeeding ages to declare future events[x], and especially to predict "his sufferings, and the glory that should follow." And *in reference to this very thing,* St. Peter calls the Holy Ghost, "*The Spirit of Christ*[y]." On all these occasions, Christ acted by the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit, who, according to the plan fixed in the Divine counsels, was deputed to fulfil the will of Christ. This was made manifest by our blessed Lord whilst he was yet on earth: for on many different occasions, he promised to his Disciples to "*send* them the Holy Ghost[z]." He told them also that the Father would send them the Holy Ghost *in his name*[a]: yea, in an authoritative manner, "he breathed on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost[b]:" and on the day of Pentecost, he, according to his promise, sent forth the Holy Ghost on all his Disciples, as it is said: "Being by the right hand of

[r] Isai. xlii. 1. and liii. 11.
[s] John xii. 49.
[t] 1 Pet. iii. 18—20.
[u] Neh. ix. 20.
[x] 2 Pet. i. 21.
[y] 1 Pet. i. 11.
[z] John xvi. 7.
[a] John xiv. 26.
[b] John xx. 22.

God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye both see and hear[c]." In every thing which from that period the Holy Ghost enabled the Apostles to do and teach, he acted as the deputy of Christ, *not himself originating* what he revealed, or *speaking it of himself*, but declaring to them what Christ himself had heard and received from the Father[d], and what he, the Holy Spirit, had heard and received from Christ. Our Lord himself says, in one place,—"The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works[e]:" and again, "The word which ye hear, is not mine, but the Father's who sent me[f]:" and then afterwards, respecting the Holy Spirit, he says, "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for *he shall not speak of himself;* but, *whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak;* and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for *he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you*[g]."

But there is a yet further reason for the Holy Spirit being called "the Spirit of Christ," viz. that *to him was delegated the express office of glorifying Christ.* Our Lord, as you have just heard, said, "He shall glorify me; for he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you." Accordingly we find, that all the miracles which were wrought by the Apostles for the confirming of the doctrines which they preached, were wrought by the agency of the Holy Ghost[h], and *that*, too, for the express purpose of bearing witness to Christ as the true Messiah[i]. It was "that one and the self-same Spirit who wrought all in all[k]." The different graces also which were exercised by the saints for the honouring of Christ, were formed in them by this same divine Agent; on which account they are called "the fruits of the Spirit[l]." In fact, as Christ

[c] Acts ii. 33. [d] John xvi. 13. [e] John xiv. 10.
[f] John xiv. 24. [g] John xvi. 13—15.
[h] Heb. ii. 4. and xiv. 3. [i] John xv. 26.
[k] 1 Cor. xii. 7—11. [l] Gal. v. 22.

was the fountain from which, in all cases, the living water flowed[m], and the reservoir from whence the holy oil descended through the golden pipes of divine ordinances upon all God's waiting and obedient people[n], so in every thing which the Holy Spirit either then did, or at the present moment does, impart to men, in a way either of gifts or graces, his object has ever been the same, viz. to bear testimony to Christ, and to fix our regards on Christ, as our only and all-sufficient Saviour.

See this exemplified at the time of Peter's mission to Cornelius. Peter commending to Cornelius the Lord Jesus as the only Saviour, whether of Jews or Gentiles, says, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." Then we are told, that instantly, "*while Peter yet spake these words,* the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word," precisely as he had done on the Apostles at the day of Pentecost[o]. Thus, in all that is now revealed to the souls of men respecting Christ, or that is imparted to them as the purchase of his blood, it is communicated to them by the Spirit; so that all, without exception, must say, "We have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God[p]."

In this mode of speaking of the Holy Spirit, we may possibly be thought to have made him inferior to the Father and the Son. But the inferiority is *not personal,* but *official;* not as the Sacred Three subsist in themselves, but as they sustain and execute their respective offices in the economy of redemption. As bearing, what may be called a subordinate part in the mysterious work of man's salvation, a disparity may be ascribed to him; and he may be called "the Spirit of the Father," and "the Spirit of Christ:" but, in himself, he is equal both with the Father and

[m] John vii. 37—39.
[n] Zech. iv. 6, 11, 12.
[o] Acts x. 43, 44. and xi. 15.
[p] 1 Cor. ii. 10, 12.

the Son, and is in every way entitled to the same respect, and "love," and confidence, as they[q].

Be it then remembered, that this is He, whom every Christian must have dwelling and abiding in him. St. Paul expressly calls him, "*The Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us*[r]." And if we mark carefully the whole passage from whence my text is taken, we shall find him designated by those different names, *The Spirit of God*, and *The Spirit of Christ*, and *Christ himself*. Hear the Apostle's words: "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that *the Spirit of God* dwell in you. Now if any man have not *the Spirit of Christ*, he is none of his. And if *Christ* be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness; (i. e. if *Christ* be in you, though your bodies shall suffer the penalty of death, your souls shall never die): but if *the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead* dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by *his Spirit that dwelleth in you*[s]."

Now then this Spirit we must all "have;" and if we have him not, we cannot belong to Christ.

But here it will be asked, What is meant by "having" the Spirit? Are we all to possess the power of "working miracles, and speaking divers kinds of tongues[t]?" No: the time for such things is long since passed. That they may be renewed at the time when God's ancient people shall be restored to his favour, and the whole Gentile world shall be converted to the faith of Christ, is probable enough: but no such power exists at this day, except in the conceit of a few brain-sick enthusiasts; nor, if it did, would it have any bearing upon the subject before us. The possession of that power would not constitute us Christ's: for we have reason to think that Judas wrought miracles, as well as the other Apostles; and yet, as our Lord tells us, he was no better than a devil all the while[u]. That possession of the Spirit

[q] Rom. xv. 30. [r] 2 Tim. i. 14. [s] Rom. viii. 9—11.
[t] 1 Cor. xii. 10. [u] John vi. 70.

of which my text speaks, is of such a discriminating nature, that no man who has it can fail to belong to Christ, and no man who has it not can have any part or lot with him. The Spirit of God is promised to us, to dwell in us as in his temple; for we are to be "the habitation of God through the Spirit[x];" and he is further to operate in us effectually for all the ends and purposes of our salvation, producing in us all "the fruits of goodness, and righteousness, and truth[y]." His motions may not unfitly be compared with the operations of the soul in the human body. Without the soul, the body cannot perform any vital function whatever: but when that spiritual inhabitant is present with us, and discharges its proper offices, we shew, by the various exercises of our mind and body, that it really dwelleth in us. Now the Spirit of God performs in the soul an office somewhat analogous to this. The soul by itself has respect only to things visible and temporal; but, when filled by the Spirit of God, it occupies itself about things invisible and eternal. And precisely as the body needs the presence and operation of the soul for the discharge of its offices in relation to this world, so does the soul need the influences of the Holy Spirit for the discharge of its duties in reference to the world to come.

To a carnal mind, this may appear strange. But it corresponds exactly with what St. Paul says:—"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but *Christ liveth in me*[z]." And again, he says, "When *Christ, who is our life,* shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory[a]."

The particular operations of the Spirit of Christ will come under our consideration hereafter. My present object is merely to shew who that blessed Spirit is, whom we are to have dwelling in us, and for what ends and purposes he is promised to us. He is none other than God himself: and, as I have said, he operates as really and effectually in our souls, as our souls operate in our bodies.

[x] Eph. ii. 22. [y] Eph. v. 9. [z] Gal. ii. 20. [a] Col. iii. 4.

I am aware that this is a truth but little considered; a truth, the very mention of which is, by the generality of Christians, accounted visionary at least, if not impious and profane. But if this truth be not admitted, yea, and admitted too as a matter of primary importance, all that we shall have to advance, in our remaining discourses, will only create disgust. I beg, therefore, that this be duly weighed; *that the text, in conjunction with the context, be diligently studied;* and that prayer be offered by us all to Almighty God, who has promised to "give wisdom to those who ask it at his hands[b];" that so our minds may be led to receive the word with candour, and our hearts be opened to embrace it. If we enter not into a candid investigation of this subject, the word will only prove a stumbling-block to our feet, and "become a savour of death unto death," instead of being, as I would wish it, "a savour of life unto life[c]." Verily there is a great fault, both amongst Christian ministers and Christian hearers, in relation to it. Ministers in general enter not, by any means, with sufficient clearness and fulness into this part of divine truth. Many, who, at the time of their ordination, have professed that they were "moved by the Holy Ghost" to take upon them the ministerial office, and have joined in that heavenly anthem—

> "Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,
> And lighten with celestial fire;
> Thou the anointing Spirit art,
> Who dost thy sevenfold gifts impart;
> Thy blessed unction from above
> Is comfort, life, and fire of love;"—

I say, many who have thus, in the presence of the whole Church, professed their faith as in perfect accordance with our subject, in their ministrations altogether overlook it, except at the time appointed by the Church for the special consideration of it; and even then they touch it but superficially, and bring it forward only lest the expectation of the people, who look for some instruction respecting it,

[b] Jam. i. 5. [c] 2 Cor. ii. 16.

should be disappointed. And Christian hearers feel no lack, though they pass the whole remainder of the year, without ever being reminded of the truth of which my text speaks; *i.e.* of the necessity of having the Holy Ghost imparted to us in order to our final salvation. Nay, even "Masters of Israel," of whom better things might be hoped, are yet ignorant of these things; and, when told that they must be born again of the Spirit, too often reply, with Nicodemus, "How can these things be[d]?" In fact, we of the Church of England, having a season consecrated to the special consideration of this subject, have, from this very circumstance, our guilt greatly aggravated. We have heard, from year to year, the declaration in my text; and yet perhaps have never once put the question to ourselves, "Have I received the Holy Ghost? have I the Spirit of Christ dwelling in me? have I ever sought this gift, and earnestly implored of God to bestow it on me? have I, in the course of my whole life, so much as once felt any solicitude about it?" Let this whole assembly put these questions to themselves; and then let them see in what a perilous state they are, and with what a disposition of mind they ought to come to the further consideration of this all-important subject. Indeed, indeed, I must declare, from Almighty God, that, whatever any man may think of his attainments or his virtues, he is not a Christian truly, if his soul be not a temple of the Holy Ghost. He may have many amiable qualities, but he does not belong to Christ; nor can he ever dwell with Christ in the eternal world, if Christ do not dwell in him, and abide with him, in this world.

Whence the necessity for this heavenly gift arises will be opened in our next. But I must, in the mean time, warn all, that the subject is a matter of life and death. It is not to be listened to with mere curiosity, but as a point which at our peril we must understand, and at our peril must experience. If it is of importance whether we belong to Christ or not, it is of importance to ascertain whether we have *this evidence*

[d] John iii. 9, 10.

of our belonging to him: for the declaration of God is unquestionable, and his decision is irreversible; nor is there any exception whatever made: "If *any* man have not the Spirit of Christ, *he is none of his.*" He may be in a high and dignified station; but he is not therefore Christ's. He may be greatly distinguished for the variety and extent of his intellectual attainments: but he is not therefore Christ's. He may be looked up to as a pattern of moral excellence and virtue; but neither will that be any decisive evidence of his belonging to Christ. Whoever, or whatever he may be, if he have not the Holy Ghost abiding in him, he is none of Christ's. He may now make light of this truth; he may explain it away; he may "puff at it[e]" (as the Scripture speaks), with contemptuous indignation; but he shall find it true to his cost. Let me, however, hope that the minds of all shall "be opened, as Lydia's was, to attend to what shall be spoken[f];" and that "the word being received with meekness as an engrafted word, shall prove as effectual, as it is able, to save your souls[g]."

But, whilst I would impress on all a sense of the absolute and indispensable necessity which exists for our possessing this heavenly gift, I must not close my subject without declaring, for the comfort of my audience, the willingness of Almighty God to bestow it upon all without exception. He has told us, that if an earthly parent will not refuse bread to his famished child, much less will He refuse his Holy Spirit unto them that ask him[h]. Nor let any be discouraged on account of their unworthiness. A more unworthy character can scarcely be conceived than that of the Samaritan woman, whose guilt, it should seem, was not a little aggravated by refusing to our Lord a draught of water; yet to her did he say, "If *thou* knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given *thee* living water[i]." Let all of us then come thirsting for this water of

[e] Ps. x. 5. [f] Acts xvi. 14. [g] Jam. i. 21.
[h] Luke xi. 13 [i] John iv. 10, 14.

life. Nor let any erroneous presumption be harboured in our minds, as though there were nothing peculiar in this gift; but let every one of us seek it, yea, seek it earnestly, "with strong crying and tears," that so we may be heard and answered, and "the Saviour be magnified in the midst of us[k]," and "our souls be saved in the great day of the Lord Jesus[l]."

[k] Acts xix. 17. [l] 1 Cor. v. 5.

MDCCCLXIV.

OUR NEED OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Rom. viii. 9. *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

THE Jewish religion, by the express command of its Divine Author, would not admit of any relaxation of its principles, or any departure from its established ordinances. Not only did it prohibit any connexion with idolaters, but it forbade even the mention of the name of any false god. In all its appointments, it formed so broad a line of separation between the Jews and the rest of the world, that it was considered by the Gentiles as inspiring its followers with an utter hatred of all the human race. The New Testament has, to a certain degree, shared amongst the heathen the same universal antipathy, and upon the same grounds. If the religion of the Lord Jesus would have admitted of any union with idolatry, he would have been readily received amongst the objects of worship which the Romans venerated; and his religion, instead of being universally proscribed, would have been judged worthy of general respect. But the Apostles were commanded to preach the Gospel every where, as requiring an exclusive regard; and to enforce it with this authoritative declaration, that "all who believed and embraced it should be saved, but that all who embraced it not should be damned[a]." Its doctrines were inculcated as so sacred, that "if even an angel from heaven should attempt

[a] Mark xvi. 16.

to establish any position contrary to them, he should be held accursed[b]." This inflexible spirit pervades the whole of our religion, so far as it relates to its fundamental truths. Every man must yield to it at his peril: and not to those parts only which are commended to us by our reason, but to those parts also which depend entirely on revelation, and to which reason is constrained to bow. Not to mention innumerable other passages which partake of this unbending character, I will take that which forms the subject of our present series: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Here is a declaration so broad, so explicit, so determinate, as to admit of no qualification, no exception whatever. To it every child of man must submit; and "whoever shall stumble over it as a rock of offence, shall be broken; and on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder[c]." Taking for granted that you have, agreeably to my request, examined carefully for yourselves my text in connexion with the context, and that you see my interpretation of it to be correct (for "the Spirit of Christ," mentioned in my text, cannot by any possibility be understood as meaning *the disposition* of Christ), I proceed, with all humility, to the further consideration of the awful truth which I have undertaken to develope.

Now, whether we could shew the reasonableness of this declaration or not, it would be our bounden duty to receive it with implicit confidence, and to regard it as the avowed and unalterable determination of the Most High. But I think it may be clearly shewn, that this is by no means an arbitrary appointment, resulting merely from the sovereign will of God. It appears to be rather a declaration founded on the actual state of man as a fallen creature. When man was in his primeval state of holiness, in himself complete, he needed neither a Saviour to work out a redemption for him, nor the Holy Spirit to apply that redemption to him. But, as a fallen creature, he stands in need of both. A Redeemer is necessary for

[b] Gal. i. 8, 9. [c] Matt. xxi. 44.

him, that he may be brought back to God; and the gift of the Holy Spirit is necessary for him, in order that he may come to Christ aright, and find acceptance with God through Christ. This need of the Spirit's influence is the part of my subject which I am now called to unfold; and I pray God, that, whilst I address myself to it with all Christian fidelity, "the word may come to every soul amongst you, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance[d].

Let me however first, in few words, repeat what we mean, when we say, that men must "*have*" the Spirit of Christ: for, unless we have definite ideas upon that subject, we can never fully comprehend the point which we are endeavouring to set before you.

It is obvious that the possession of the Spirit, which is here spoken of, must be somewhat very different from any natural or acquired endowment, since we may possess every thing which constitutes us rational and accountable beings, and yet not be Christ's; whilst, on the other hand, however defective we may, in other respects, be, the possession of it will infallibly prove us to belong to Christ. If it be asked, What does this possession of the Spirit import? I answer, It is, as I shewed in my last, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our souls, as his temple, and his operating in us, as a quickening and influential principle of life.

That point being determined, we shall proceed, agreeably to the plan before laid down, to shew,

II. Why the possession of that Spirit is necessary to our being Christ's accepted followers. For the elucidation of this, there are three points to be established; namely:—*first*, That all our faculties are impaired by sin; *next*, That, without an entire renovation of them, Christ can never accept or acknowledge us as his; and, *lastly*, That none but the Spirit of Christ can ever accomplish in us this necessary work. These points being established, the reasonableness, no less than the certainty, of God's declaration in my text, will appear, to the conviction of every

[d] 1 Thess. i. 5.

gainsayer, and to the satisfaction of every unprejudiced mind.

First, then, let it be remembered, That *all our faculties are impaired by sin.*

It is clear, that we are not *now* such as we were when we first came out of our Creator's hands. We were created, originally, "after God's own image[e]." Our mind was in perfect accordance with his mind, and our will with his will. There was not so much as a thought of our hearts which did not emanate from him, and had not respect to his glory. Our bodies were every way fitted to aid the soul in all its operations. Not an inclination, affection, or appetite, existed in us, but in perfect unison with the proper offices of the soul, and in subserviency to its dictates. Man's whole delight was in God alone. As far as his happiness was in any respect derived from the creature, it was God in the creature, and not the creature itself, that was the real source of that happiness: the creature was only the medium of communication between him and his God. The goodness of God was seen and tasted by him in every thing: and every object around him afforded him an occasion of admiration, and gratitude, and love. To dwell in the presence of God, to commune with him, to receive and execute every intimation of his will; in a word, to admire God *in* every thing, to adore him *for* every thing, and to glorify him *by* every thing, this was the constant employment of man in his state of innocence, and the one uniform occupation both of his soul and body.

But what of all this is now left to us? We are altogether departed from God. Every faculty of our souls, and every member of our bodies, is become depraved, so that there remains in us no part of the moral image of our God. As beings of a superior order, we still are the lords of this lower creation; and, in the exercise of this authority, we, to a certain degree, resemble Him who is the governor of the universe[f]. But in righteousness and true holiness,

[e] Gen. i. 26. [f] 1 Cor. xi. 7.

which I call his *moral* image, we bear no resemblance to him whatever. Our understanding is blinded, so that, instead of approving God's revealed will, we turn away from it with dislike. His law, as contained in the Ten Commandments, is deemed by us unnecessarily strict; and the sanctions by which it is enforced are regarded as needlessly severe. His very Gospel, which is the result of his eternal counsels, and contains in it "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge[g]," is treated by us as a cunningly devised fable. To the self-righteous amongst us, it is a stumbling-block; and to those who are wise in their own conceit, it is mere foolishness. We are, both in heart and life, altogether opposed to it. In our eyes sin has no deformity, and holiness no beauty. Communion with God affords us no pleasure. Prayer and praise are exercises which are a burthen to us, rather than a delight; and instead of walking in constant and familiar intercourse with God, as Adam did before the fall, we flee from him, as Adam did after his transgression, and rather hide ourselves from him as an enemy, than go forth to meet him as a friend.

But "is it I who say this; or saith not the Scripture the same also[h]?" God's own account of us is, that "when he looked down from heaven upon men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek after God, they were all gone aside, they were all together become filthy, there was not one that did good, no, not one[i]." He further adds, that "every imagination of the thoughts of men's hearts was only evil continually[k]." Nor let it be supposed that this was descriptive only of some more flagrant transgressors who lived at one particular age or place: for the Apostles themselves, previous to their conversion, were of this very character, as St. Paul most candidly confesses. Speaking of those "who walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in all the children of disobedience," he says, "Among

[g] Col. ii. 3.
[h] 1 Cor. ix. 8.
[i] Ps. xiv. 2, 3. with Rom. iii. 10—18.
[k] Gen. vi. 5.

whom we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature children of wrath, even as others[l]." And again, "We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another[m]."

But, together with the Scripture, let me appeal to personal experience. What have been our own habits even from our youth? Have we delighted ourselves in God? Has it been the joy of our hearts to draw nigh to him in the exercise of prayer and praise? And have we sought after the communications of his grace and the testimonies of his love, as our supreme happiness? When the question has occurred to our minds, "Who will shew us any good?" has the reply of David instantly been made, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us[n]?" Must we not rather confess, that every vanity has been regarded by us with a deeper interest than our God, and every base lust been served in preference to him? Yes, we have, as the Scripture asserts, "worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for evermore[o]." And if at any time we have been reproved for this, our heart has risen up against the will of God, in the very spirit of Pharaoh, when he said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go[p]." And now I make my appeal to you. Is this overstated? If any think that it is, tell me who is there amongst us whose body has at all times been in perfect subjection to his soul, so as to render a prompt and uniform obedience to its holy motions? With whom has it not rather been in a constant state of rebellion against the soul; and in whom, unless he have been renewed by divine grace, does it not, with insatiable avidity, follow yet daily its own corrupt desires? It is true

[l] Eph. ii. 2, 3. [m] Tit. iii. 3. [n] Ps. iv. 6.
[o] Rom. i. 25. [p] Exod. v. 2.

in all of us, though not exactly in the same way, that the body, which was ordained to serve, exercises a tyrannic sway over, the soul; and the soul, which was ordained to regulate all the motions of the body, is made a very pander to its corrupt appetites.

Now then, agreeably to what I mentioned as the *second* point to be considered, I beg you to inquire with care, and to judge with candour, whether, whilst we are in such a state, Christ can receive us, and acknowledge us as his? I think it clear, that he cannot: for *it would counteract all the purposes of God* in the redemption of the world. If we trace up, as we must, the whole work of redemption to the eternal counsels of God, I ask, To what has he predestinated his people? Is it not that they should be "conformed to the image of his Son[q]?" To what has he chosen them? Is it not that they may be "holy and without blame before him in love[r]?" Yes: to no one soul amongst us shall salvation ever be vouchsafed, but "through sanctification of the Spirit," as well as through "belief of the truth[s]." But how would these purposes be accomplished if men were saved with all their corruptions unmortified and unsubdued? Besides, *it would defeat all the ends of our Saviour's mission.* "He came to destroy the works of the devil[t];" to "redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works[u]." Even at the time of his conception in the womb, his name Jesus was given him as declarative of this very thing, that he should "save his people," not *in* their sins, but *from* them[x]. But he might as well have never come at all, if these ends are to be set aside, and mankind are to be saved without any respect to their moral character. Further, *the office of the Holy Spirit, as a sanctifier, would be altogether frustrated and superseded:* yea, and *the whole word of of God would be invalidated and made void.* God has declared, that "the unrighteous shall not inherit the

[q] Rom. viii. 29. [r] Eph. i. 4. [s] 2 Thess. ii. 13.
[t] 1 John iii. 8. [u] Tit. ii. 14. [x] Matt i. 21.

kingdom of God[y]:" and that "no unclean thing shall enter into his presence[z]." But what truth would there be in these declarations, if an unrenewed man could stand with acceptance in the sight of God?

But, in fact, *an unregenerate man could not be happy in the presence of God, even if he were admitted to it.* For, how could so corrupt a creature endure the presence of a holy God; and a creature so full of enmity against God, be happy in immediate communion with him? How could a person who has never found any pleasure in holy exercises, bear to spend an eternity in duties, for which he has no taste, no fitness, no capacity? He has no meetness for heaven. He would be altogether out of his element there: heaven would be no heaven to him, for want of the dispositions necessary for the enjoyment of it. If "two cannot walk together on earth, except they be agreed[a]," much less could the glorified saints and angels, all formed after the perfect image of their God, admit to their converse, and associate themselves with, those who bear upon their souls nothing but the image and deformity of Satan. St. Paul puts this in a very striking point of view, and appeals to us for the justness of his sentiments: "What fellowship," says he, "hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel[b]?"

If then Christ will not make void the eternal purposes of his Father, and the ends of his own incarnation and death,—if he will not render nugatory the office of the Holy Spirit as the sanctifier of God's elect,—and if he will not so dishonour himself as to number amongst his people those who have spent their whole lives in "treading under foot his blood, and doing despite to the Spirit of his grace[c]"—in a word, if he will not exalt to his glory those who have no taste, no capacity for the enjoyment of it,—I think it clear, that Christ neither will nor can acknowledge any

[y] 1 Cor. vi. 9. [z] Rev. xxi. 27. [a] Amos iii. 3.
[b] 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15. [c] Heb. x. 29.

people as his, till they have received an entire renovation of their nature, and a meetness for that glory to which he would exalt them.

Let me not, however, be misunderstood. I am far from saying that our fallen nature renders us incapable of enjoying heaven, provided we be washed from our guilt in the blood of Christ, and be renewed by his Spirit in our inward man. On the contrary, not only will the Lord Jesus Christ, in that case, receive and acknowledge us as his, but "God the Father also will rejoice over us with joy, and rest in his love, and joy over us with singing[d];" and both the Father and the Son will be eternally glorified in us. But this I say, that, till we are restored to the Divine image, the Lord Jesus can never have pleasure in us, nor can God the Father ever recognise us as his peculiar and redeemed people; for our Lord has repeatedly, and in the most authoritative manner, asserted, that, "Except we be born again, we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven[e]." If ever we would belong to Christ, we must be so renewed, as to be made, if not in act, yet in desire and endeavour at least, "pure, as Christ himself is pure[f]," and "perfect, as our Father which is in heaven is perfect[g]."

But here arises the question, By what power can this change be effected? And I answer, (as I undertook, in the *third* place, to shew,) it is by the Spirit of Christ alone that this change ever was, or ever can be, wrought.

To imagine that this change is of necessity wrought in baptism, is a very fatal error. I presume not to say that God *cannot* accomplish it then as well as at any other time. Nor do I deny but that God *does*, on some occasions, make that ordinance the means of peculiar benefit to the soul. But the mere administration of the baptismal rite can no more sanctify a man, than the administration of the Lord's supper can. And if a man at the Lord's supper may, by receiving it amiss, "eat and drink his own

[d] Zeph. iii. 17.
[e] John iii. 3.
[f] 1 John iii. 3.
[g] Matt. v. 48.

damnation[h];" so, by receiving baptism amiss, he may receive a curse rather than a blessing. This was actually the case with Simon Magus, who, though baptized by Philip the Evangelist, remained in the very "gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity[i]." There is, doubtless, (and I wish the avowal of it to be distinctly noticed,) *a great change effected in baptism.* But it is a change of *state,* and not of *nature.* By baptism a person is admitted into covenant with God, and obtains a TITLE to all the blessings of the Christian covenant, exactly as a Jew by circumcision became entitled to all the blessings of the Jewish covenant. St. Paul says, "To them, *as Israelites,* (who have been admitted into covenant with God by circumcision,) to them "pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises[k]." But were they *therefore* renewed, and sanctified, and saved? Surely not: for the Apostle "appealed to God, that, notwithstanding their *title* to these blessings, he had "great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart" on their account[l]. So then it is with those who have been baptized: they have a *title* to all the blessings of salvation; a title which, in an unbaptized state, they did not possess. But the actual possession of those blessings can only be obtained by the exercise of faith in Christ for the justification of their souls, and by the influence of the Holy Spirit for their restoration to the Divine image. To regard it in any other view, is to assimilate it to the extreme unction of the Papists, and to lead men into the most fatal error.

If, then, we do not of necessity receive a new nature in baptism, when and how are we to receive it? Can we, by any efforts of our own, form it in ourselves? I answer, No. It is called in Scripture "a new creation[m];" and a man can no more create himself anew, than he could create himself at first. If any think that he has within himself a power to

[h] 1 Cor. xi. 29. [i] Acts viii. 23. [k] Rom. ix. 4.
[l] Rom. ix. 2. [m] 2 Cor. v. 17.

renew himself after the Divine image, he has, within his own reach, the means of proving it to demonstration. Let him set about it, and accomplish it, and he will at once disprove every word which the Scripture speaks respecting this matter. Our Lord says, "Without me ye can do nothing[n];" and St. Paul says, that "God alone can give us either to will or to do any thing that is good[o];" yea, that of ourselves "we are not sufficient even to think a good thought as of ourselves: our sufficiency for it must be of God[p]." If any man think this not true, let him try it. I readily acknowledge, that a man may correct some outward vices, and practise some outward duties; but can he bring himself to hate every kind and degree of sin, and to lothe and abhor himself on account of his indwelling corruptions? Can he, without the Spirit's influence, so "mortify the deeds of the body[q]," as no longer to live after the flesh? And can he sit loose to all the things of time and sense, and "set his affections" wholly and exclusively "on things above[r]?" Can he, in a word, bring himself to love God supremely, and to delight himself truly in all holy exercises? Can he further so form his soul after the likeness of Christ, as, under the heaviest trials, to indulge no other tempers than those which he manifested, and willingly to lay down his life, as he did, and as every follower of Christ must be ready to do[s], for the honour and glory of his God? Let him do these things by any power of his own, and we will at once acknowledge the erroneousness of our present statement. But the more diligently the attempt be made, the more deeply will any man be convinced, that he must have the Spirit of Christ; and that, without the renovating influences of that Divine Agent, he can never become one of Christ's peculiar and approved people. The Spirit of Christ must "open the eyes of our understanding[t]." The Spirit of Christ must "renew us in our inward

[n] John xv. 5. [o] Phil. ii. 13. [p] 2 Cor. iii. 5.
[q] Rom. viii. 13. [r] Col. iii. 2. [s] Luke xiv. 26
[t] Luke xxiv. 45

man[u]." The Spirit of Christ alone can so reveal the Saviour to us, that, with any measure of true affiance, we should "call him Lord[x]." No other power than his can ever assimilate us to the risen Saviour, enabling us to die unto sin, and to rise again unto righteousness[y]. Nothing, I say, but the mighty working of that power that raised Christ himself from the dead, can effect this change in us: and, consequently, the assertion in my text is clearly proved, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Let it then be borne in mind, that, as this is not a mere arbitrary appointment of the Deity, so neither is it an enthusiastic conceit. It is a decision of the Most High, arising out of the necessities of our nature, and proceeding from the boundless riches of his grace, which has made such an astonishing provision for us.

I hope I may now consider this point as proved, and may henceforth assume it as an acknowledged truth, that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit's influence is founded on the state and character of every living man. Indeed, if my statement upon this part of my subject have failed to carry conviction along with it, all that I shall have to bring forward in my two remaining discourses will appear destitute of any solid foundation, and unworthy of any serious attention. It is on this account that I have devoted one entire discourse to this part of my subject. I know whom I address, and that they will justly expect to see every step of my argument made clear and unquestionable. I have great and important truths to bring before you in my remaining discourses; and, if I shew you not to your satisfaction the foundation on which they stand, I cannot hope, or even wish, at any time, and least of all in these days of fanaticism and folly, that they should be favourably received by you. "I speak as unto wise men; and I call upon you to judge what I say[z]." But I do hope that

[u] 2 Cor. iv. 16.
[x] 1 Cor. xii. 3.
[y] Eph. i. 17—21.
[z] 1 Cor. x. 15.

the words which I have delivered have carried conviction along with them. And if any doubt remain on the mind of a single individual, I call upon him to study well the state of his own soul before God. If any one of you think himself not so fallen as I have represented, let him examine well the Scriptures, and compare them with the whole of his past life. Or, if he think he can restore himself to God's image by any power of his own, let it be seen that he can do so, and let him prove it by an actual appeal to fact. Or if, in the failure of these endeavours, he is disposed to maintain that he has no need of such a transformation of soul as I have spoken of, then let him inquire diligently, and see, whether there be not on God's part an insurmountable obstacle to his admission into heaven in an unrenewed state; and also, whether, if admitted into those blissful mansions, there would not be on his part an insuperable impediment to his enjoyment of them; and whether that be not true, which our Lord declared to the obstinate and unbelieving Jews, "Whither I go, ye *cannot* come[a]."

But none of you will ever be able to satisfy yourselves on any one of these points. If you could establish any one of them, you would set aside the authority of the inspired volume, and disprove at once the whole of Christianity. But if you acknowledge, as you must, the truth of our preceding statement, then set yourselves immediately to make a due improvement of all that you have heard. Beg of God, especially, that you may be impressed with a deep sense of your exceeding sinfulness, and of your need of the Holy Spirit's influence to renovate your souls. And do not rest in a mere outward acknowledgment of your guilt and helplessness, but cry mightily to God, and "give him no rest[b]" till he bestow his Holy Spirit upon you. Nor harbour a thought of delaying this work to "a more convenient season[c]:" for, who can tell whether that more convenient season shall

[a] John viii. 21. [b] Isai. lxii. 7. [c] Acts xxiv. 25.

ever arrive? More especially now that God's judgments are so visibly, and with such rapid strides, traversing the earth, and may, for aught we know, be even already at our doors; who can tell, whether even a single day may be allowed you for repairing your present neglect, and for acquiring that renovation of soul which you so greatly need. Indeed, this is no time[d] for any of us to delay our preparation for death and judgment. On the contrary, the very circumstance of the proximity of danger, should give tenfold energy to our endeavours; since, in the event of any sudden seizure, a consciousness of having experienced this change, would tend to tranquillize our minds, and, by disarming death of its terrors, to counteract the effect of disease itself, which would otherwise gather strength from the fears that were excited by it.

I mean not, however, to be an alarmist on these matters: but on the matters of eternity I am an alarmist, even as the Apostle Paul was; and "knowing," as he did, "the terrors of the Lord, I would persuade men[e]:" yes, I would persuade every one amongst you, old and young, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, to "flee from the wrath to come[f]," and to "lay hold on eternal life[g]." I ask every one here present, Is my text true, or is it not? If it be true, what is it less than madness to waste the time now afforded you for obtaining the gift of God's Holy Spirit, and securing thereby the salvation of your souls? It will be too late to repent, when we are taken hence, or to "ask for even a drop of water to cool our tongues[h];" when now, if we would but cry to God, we might obtain "rivers of living water[i]." Were we but in earnest, no soul amongst us should be suffered to seek this gift in vain. Our blessed Lord has promised his Holy Spirit to us; yea, he has himself received this heavenly gift on purpose

[d] Nov. 13, 1831, when the cholera had actually begun to shew itself at Sunderland.

[e] 2 Cor. v. 11. [f] Matt. iii. 7. [g] 1 Tim. vi. 12.
[h] Luke xvi. 24. [i] John vii. 38.

that he may bestow it upon us[k]. But, however free his promises be, "he will be inquired of by us," before he will perform them[l]. The promise runs, "Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you[m]." Let us then, in dependence on this promise, entreat of God to give us, in the first place, his Holy Spirit as a "spirit of grace and supplication[n];" and then, in answer to our prayers, to "pour out his Spirit, even, as it were, in rivers and floods upon us[o];" that so there might be accomplished in us that good work, which it is the Spirit's office to perform, by renovating our souls, and "causing us to walk in God's statutes, and to keep his judgments, and do them[p]." Then, having obtained this inestimable gift, let us be careful to improve it aright, never "resisting his holy motions[q]," lest we provoke God to "withdraw his Spirit from us[r]," and with holy indignation to swear, that "his Spirit shall strive with us no more[s];" and that "we shall never enter into his rest[t]."

The most important parts of my subject must of necessity be deferred to the remaining opportunities of addressing you. This, which I may call only a prefatory part, I will conclude with that beautiful Collect of our Church, in which the whole that has been brought before you is thus briefly and piously expressed: "O God, forasmuch as without thee we are not able to please thee, grant that thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen[u]."

[k] In Ps. lxviii. 18. it is, "he *received*;" but in Eph. iv. 8. "he *gave*." He *received* in order that he might *give*.

[l] Ezek. xxxvi. 37. [m] Matt. vii. 7. [n] Zech. xii. 10.
[o] Isai. xliv. 3. [p] Ezek. xxxvi. 27. [q] Acts vii. 51.
[r] Ps. li. 11. [s] Gen. vi. 3. [t] Heb. iii. 11.
[u] Collect for Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.

MDCCCLXV.

THE SPIRIT'S WORK IN UNBELIEVERS.

Rom. viii. 9. *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

IN our two preceding discourses, we touched on points necessary to be considered in order to a just apprehension of our subject; but they were rather of an introductory nature, than a direct unfolding of the subject itself. We now come to that which is of prime importance, and in which our present and eternal interests are most deeply involved, namely, the work which the Holy Spirit accomplishes in men, in order to their becoming the people and the property of Christ. And in our statements we will exercise all imaginable caution — not, on the one hand, to fall short of what the Scripture indispensably requires; nor, on the other hand, to strain any requirement of Scripture beyond what it plainly and incontrovertibly imports: for if, on the one hand, we are bound, at the peril of our souls, not to withhold any thing that can be profitable to you; so we are extremely anxious, on the other hand, not by carrying any part of our subject to excess, to "make sad the heart of any whom God would not have made sad[a]."

In prosecution of the plan before laid down, I now come to state,

III. *What the Holy Spirit will work in us in order to our being Christ's.* And here I shall comprehend the whole in those three acknowledged duties,— repentance, faith, and obedience. I say then, that, in order to bring us to Christ, the Holy Spirit will,— *first,* Convince us of sin; *secondly,* He will reveal Christ to us, as the appointed and only Saviour; and, *thirdly,* He will lead us to an unreserved surrender of ourselves to God, in a way of holy obedience.

First,—He will convince us of sin. This is the first work of the Spirit in bringing us to Christ; and

[a] Ezek. xiii. 22.

till this is accomplished, we neither are, nor can be, Christ's. Of this work, there is not any real experience in the natural man. He may have, as we often see, a spirit of bondage; which appears from the apprehensions which men betray in the prospect of death and judgment: but as for any real humiliation, he has it not; nor can he form it in himself by any power of his own. It is only when Christ sends his Holy Spirit into our souls, that this great preparatory work is accomplished in us. It is that heavenly Agent alone, that can "take away from us the heart of stone, and give us an heart of flesh[b]." Hence our blessed Lord has promised to send his Holy Spirit for this very end: "I will send the Comforter unto you; and when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin[c]."

Now, the Holy Spirit will convince us, not of the mere existence of sin, for nobody can be ignorant of that; but of the *extent and heinousness* of our transgressions. In order to this, he will discover to us *the spiritual import of the law*. Whilst in a natural and unconverted state, we have little notion of the law, except as it appears in the mere letter. But the Holy Spirit will shew us, that it extends to every motion of the heart; that an angry wish is murder; and an impure look, adultery[d]; and an inordinate desire after any thing whatever, is a violation of the tenth commandment[e]. Thus he shews us that our sins, which to the generality appear only as the stars in a cloudy night, few, and at a great distance from each other, are, in reality, like the stars in the brightest hemisphere; or, rather, like the stars in the clearest night, viewed through a telescope of the largest power, when their numbers (the number of our sins) exceed all that we could ever have imagined; forming, as it were, one continuous mass through the whole space of our lives[f]. *The various aggravations* of our sins are then, also, brought to light, and are revealed to us as *the vilest ingratitude* towards our heavenly

[b] Ezek. xi. 19. [c] John xvi. 7, 8. [d] Matt. v. 21, 22, 27, 28.
[e] Rom. vii. 7. [f] Ps. xl. 12.

Benefactor; *the most injurious rebellion* against our almighty Creator; and *the most inconceivable folly*, as destructive of our eternal welfare.

We are apt, for the pacifying of our own minds, to balance our virtues against our faults. But the Holy Spirit, by applying the law to our consciences, and shewing us the extent of its demands, makes us to see that our brightest virtues are, in fact, but splendid sins, falling, as they do, infinitely short of that perfection which the law requires of us. Thus the Holy Spirit shews us, not only the depth of our guilt, but the awfulness of our desert; and that, if we die in an unpardoned state, we have nothing to expect at God's hands, but wrath and fiery indignation.

But, in addition to all this, there is one sin in particular of which the Holy Spirit will convince us, and which is especially referred to by our Lord,—the sin of unbelief. Our Lord says, "I will send the Comforter, to reprove the world of sin, *because they believe not on me*[g]." Now this is a sin of which the unconverted man makes no account. If he think of it at all, it is rather in extenuation than in aggravation of his other sins. He considers unbelief rather as his misfortune than his fault. He never once suspects that there is in him a corrupt bias, and an evil heart of unbelief; and that these are the main causes of his departing from the living God[h]. Nor is he at all aware that his unbelief owes its origin to the corruption of his heart, and not to any want of clearness in the things revealed.

God has sent his only dear Son into the world, to reconcile sinners unto him, by his own obedience unto death. He has, also, given most abundant evidence of this, such as must of necessity convince any dispassionate and candid mind. And he invites all the children of men to accept of mercy in this his appointed way. The heathen, who have never heard of this merciful provision made for them, are not accountable for their neglect of it; but we, who have been instructed in the knowledge of Christ, and

[g] John xvi. 7—9. [h] Heb. iii. 12

who profess to be followers of that Divine Saviour, have "made light of these things," and are utterly inexcusable for not having inquired more fully into the mystery of redeeming love, and for having practically said, "We will not have this man to reign over us[l]." Now, when the Spirit of God brings this to our view, it appears the very summit of our guilt and folly; for, in fact, instead of requiting the Saviour's love as we ought, with all imaginable gratitude and self-devotion, we have done nothing, throughout our whole lives, but "crucify to ourselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame[k]."

Thus the Spirit of God brings to our view a sense of our guilt and danger. But this is not all. He breaks the heart, and humbles it in the dust, and makes us cry out, with the converts on the day of Pentecost, "Men and brethren, what shall we do[l]?" *This effect is absolutely universal.* There may be a difference in *the degrees* with which these feelings are produced in different people: but in *quality, and effect,* they are the same in all. In all do they produce that "broken and contrite spirit, which God will not despise[m]."

Now let not this work be mistaken. Where it exists, whether the person have been more or less moral, it discovers to the mind such a total alienation from God, such an entire want of the Divine image, and such an hateful depravity of heart, as makes a man to say, with the prophet, "Woe is me! I am undone[n]:" yea, and to exclaim with Job, "Behold I am vile; I repent and abhor myself in dust and ashes[o]." These may be thought to be merely particular instances, peculiar to some distinguished saints, and that they are not to be realized or expected amongst us. But the Prophet Ezekiel tells us, that all of us without exception must "lothe ourselves for our iniquities and abominations, and *that* not only before, but after, that God is pacified towards us[p]."

[l] Luke xix. 14. [k] Heb. vi. 6. [l] Acts ii. 37.
[m] Ps. li. 17. [n] Isai. vi. 5. [o] Job xl. 4. and xlii. 6.
[p] Ezek. xvi. 63. and xxxvi. 31.

This is the very state which our Lord describes, when he says, that "he came to seek and to save that which was *lost*[q]:" and, till we know ourselves to be thus lost, we never shall come to Christ aright. We must feel ourselves, like Peter, actually sinking in the waves, and, under a sense of our perishing condition, must stretch out our hands, crying, "Save, Lord, or I perish[r]."

The next, the *second* work of the Holy Spirit is, to reveal the Lord Jesus to us as the appointed and only Saviour of the world. For this also a divine agency is wanted, as much as for the humbling of our souls before God. We may indeed acknowledge, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the appointed Saviour. We may even contend for it as an article of our creed, and write learned dissertations upon it; but all this is widely different from that kind of view which the Spirit of Christ gives to the believing soul. It is not as a speculative truth that the Holy Spirit brings this to the mind, but as a matter of indispensable importance to every soul of man; like that of pointing out the city of refuge to a man, who, hearing the pursuer of blood rapidly gaining ground upon him, feels that he must flee with all his might, if by any means he may attain the wished-for gate of safety, before the avenger shall have overtaken him.

The Spirit of God, as our Lord himself has expressed it, "takes of the things that are Christ's, and shews them to the inquiring soul." He shews to us what Christ has done and suffered for a ruined world: that he has left "the bosom of his Father[s]," and assumed our nature, and "borne our sins in his own body on the tree[t]." He shews us, that Christ is also a living Saviour, sitting at the right hand of God to complete in heaven the work which he began on earth; and that he is coming again in due season to receive us to himself, that where he is we may be also[u]. He shews us, that our blessed Lord has, in all this work, accomplished every thing that was either

[q] Matt. xviii. 11. [r] Matt. viii. 25. [s] John i. 18.
[t] 1 Pet. ii. 24. [u] John xiv. 3.

predicted concerning him in the prophecies, or shadowed forth in the Mosaic ritual. He shews us, that by that one offering of himself upon the cross, he has made an ample satisfaction "for the sins of the whole world[x]," and effected a perfect reconciliation between God and man[y], so that now God can be "just, and yet a Saviour[z];" yea, he may be "just, and yet a justifier of them that believe in Christ[a]." He shews us, that, "if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living God[b]." Convincing us, I say, of these things, he assures us, that, if only we "live by faith on this Saviour," and "receive out of his fulness" our daily "supplies of his Spirit" and grace, we have nothing to fear; for that work that is now begun in us, shall assuredly be carried on and perfected "until the day of Christ[c]." From this time the sinner builds on "Christ as the only true foundation[d]," and glories in him as "all his salvation and all his desire[e]." Even a full assurance of faith he is now enabled to exercise, under a full conviction that "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus[f];" and that "all who believe in him are justified from all things[g]."

A full assurance of *hope*, indeed, a true believer may want; but a full assurance of *faith* he must have, and should never lose. *Faith*, being founded simply on the truth of God, should never vary, under any circumstances whatever; but *hope* is founded partly on the promises of God, and partly on a consciousness that we are in that state to which the promises are made, and, therefore, it *may* vary, yea, and *should* vary, according to the progress we have made in the divine life, and the meetness we have attained for the

[x] 1 John ii. 2. [y] Col. i. 20. [z] Isai. xlv. 21
[a] Rom. iii. 26. [b] Heb. ix. 13, 14. [c] Phil. i. 6.
[d] 1 Cor. iii. 11. [e] 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. [f] Rom. viii. 1.
[g] Acts xiii. 39.

heavenly inheritance. *Faith* is *a duty*, and can never be too strong; *hope* is *a privilege*, and should rise or fall according to circumstances. The want of an assured *faith* is sin: the want of an assured *hope* may indeed argue a low, or even a sinful, state; but it is in itself rather a duty than a sin, provided we are not in a state that warrants such a hope. Strong faith will, doubtless, for the most part, generate a lively hope, and render it as influential for our safety, as it is conducive to our comfort. Hope is, in fact, the daughter of faith; and, when grown to maturity, will perform the same offices as faith, "purifying the heart after the Saviour's image[h]," and "saving the soul," both with a present and an everlasting salvation[i]. This distinction between faith and hope is necessary for our comfort, and should be particularly borne in mind by those who minister in holy things; for many, from confounding the two, are adverse to the doctrine of a full assurance of faith; whilst many, from the very same cause, are induced to write bitter things against themselves without any just occasion for their disquietude, apprehending that their *weakness of hope* argues, of necessity, *a want of faith*. But a person may have strong faith, whilst yet he is very far from an assured hope. The Canaanitish woman, who was repeatedly rejected by our Lord as an unfit person to enjoy the blessing which she solicited,—("I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel[k];" "I cannot take the children's bread, and cast it unto dogs[l],")—shewed, by her persevering importunity, that her faith in Christ was strong; and, therefore, our Lord commended her, saying, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt[m]." This, then, I have spoken, lest any, because they have not an assured *hope*, should think themselves destitute of a saving *faith*. If our faith in Christ be simple and entire, "we shall be saved by him with an everlasting salvation[n]."

[h] Acts ix. 15. with 1 John v. 3. [i] Rom. viii. 24. [k] Matt. xv. 24.
[l] Matt. xv. 26. [m] Matt. xv. 28. [n] Isai. xlv. 17.

If it be thought this knowledge of Christ is attainable by any human efforts, let the Apostle's declaration be borne in mind: "By grace ye are saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is the gift of God*[o]." And he elsewhere tells us, that "*it is given to us* to believe in Christ[p]." It was "by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation that any of old attained the knowledge of Christ[q]:" and it is by the same divine Teacher that we must all be brought to him at this time; as it is said,—"All thy children shall be taught of God[r]:" and again, "No man can come unto me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him[s]."

But I observed, that the Spirit of Christ yet further (in the *third* place) enables the believer to devote himself wholly and unreservedly to God. This is as necessary as either of the former. In fact, without this, where it can be effected, the others, even if they could exist, would be of no saving benefit to the soul. An entire surrender of the soul to God is that for which the graces of penitence and faith are given. But this also is the work of the Spirit, and can never be wrought by any finite power. The man now possesses "a divine nature[t]," totally distinct from that which he brought into the world with him. He is altogether "a new creature[u];" made so by him who created him at first, and "breathed into him a living soul[x]." And can there be any doubt by whom this change is wrought? Let the Apostle's testimony determine this point: "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus[y]." And again, "He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God; who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit[z]."

I have said that the Spirit of God makes known to the believing soul the mercies of God in Christ Jesus; and by this manifestation of God's love, he constrains the believer to "give himself up, a living sacrifice to God[a];" and, from a consciousness, that "he has been

[o] Eph. ii. 8. [p] Phil. i. 29. [q] Eph. i. 17.
[r] John vi. 45. [s] John vi. 44. [t] 2 Pet. i. 4.
[u] Gal. vi. 15. [x] Gen. ii. 7. [y] Eph. ii. 10.
[z] 2 Cor. v. 5. [a] Rom. xii. 1.

bought with a price, to glorify God with his body and his spirit, which are his[b]." From this time, the man enters on a new course, mortifying the whole body of sin, and crucifying all his corrupt affections; as it is written, "They that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts[c]." From this time, also, all the fruits of the Spirit are brought forth by him, and he progressively abounds in all the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God[d]." Holiness, in all its branches, is now the chief desire and delight of his soul. "By walking in the Spirit, he is kept from any desire to fulfil the lusts of the flesh[e]." "He can no longer commit sin, as he once did, because he is born of God[f]." Were it possible, he would become "holy, as God himself is holy[g]." His continual prayer is, that "the God of peace would sanctify him wholly; and that his whole body, soul, and spirit, may be preserved blameless unto God's heavenly kingdom[h]." As for the world, and all its vanities, he is crucified to it "by the cross of Christ; and the world, even in all its most attractive graces, is as a crucified object to him[i]." The relation between him and the world, like the tie of a departed relative, is dissolved[k]; and though *in* the world, "he is no more *of* the world, than Christ himself was of the world[l]." To walk before God, and with God, and to "maintain continual fellowship with the Father and the Son[m]," is now his one ambition, his one pursuit. And it is only in proportion as he has attained this change, that he has any evidence that he belongs to Christ. In this way, allowing only for circumstantial varieties in different cases, the Holy Spirit completes in men the three different works which I mentioned, as necessary in order to our becoming Christ's.

I know that there are some who would call this a legal statement. But I have no hesitation in saying, that it is the statement which is found in every page

[b] 1 Cor. vi. 20. [c] Gal. v. 24. [d] Phil. i. 11.
[e] Gal. v. 16. [f] 1 John iii. 9. [g] Lev. xix. 2.
[h] 1 Thess. v. 23. [i] Gal. vi. 14. [k] Rom. vii. 4.
[l] John xvii. 16. [m] 1 John i. 3.

of the inspired volume; and that no part of it can, by any means, be dispensed with. If we be not penitent, we can never come to Christ aright; if we rely on any thing but his meritorious blood and righteousness, we can never be accepted of him; and, if we yield not ourselves up to him in a way of holy obedience, he will never acknowledge us as his. The same Scripture which says, "Except ye repent, ye shall all perish[n]," says also, "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him[o];" and still further adds, "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord[p]." Now no true Disciple of Christ would wish any one of these demands to be waved, or softened down in any respect. He would most gladly comply with them all. He would assign no measure to his penitence, no bounds to his faith, no limits to his obedience. In actual attainment, it is true, he has many defects, and much that affords him occasion for grief and shame: but, in heart and mind, he is like-minded with God; and he can appeal to God, that he would regard a perfect conformity to his revealed will as a very heaven upon earth.

Now comes the question which it behoves every one of us to put to himself with all sincerity; WHAT EVIDENCE HAVE I THAT I AM CHRIST'S? Has the Spirit of Christ actually wrought these things in me? Does my conscience bear me witness that I am deeply penitent before God: and *that* not merely on account of some flagrant transgression which I may have committed, but for the indwelling corruptions of my heart, and for the defectiveness of my very best duties? Do I take the law as my rule of judgment, and feel that I have need, in reference to every one of the commandments, to pray from my inmost soul, "Lord, have mercy upon me for my past violations of *this* law, and incline my rebellious heart to keep it in future?" Can I also appeal to God that I do flee to Christ for refuge, renouncing utterly every other ground of hope, and "determining to know nothing, and rely on nothing, for my acceptance with God, but

[n] Luke xiii. 5. [o] John iii. 36. [p] Heb. xii. 14.

Jesus Christ and him crucified[q]?" Do I look with a holy jealousy and indignation on every thing that would divide with him the honour of my salvation; and is this the most rooted and habitual sentiment of my heart, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ[r]?" Further, does "the love of Christ constrain me to live, not to myself, but to Him who died for me and rose again[s];" and does my whole walk, both in public and private, bear witness for me, that I live only for God and for eternity; and that all my other pursuits, of whatsoever kind they be, are subordinated to this, and made subservient to it? Let it be remembered, I am not now asking whether we do these things *perfectly;* but whether we do them *sincerely* and *habitually;* and whether every deviation from this heavenly course be a source of grief and shame to us; yea, whether we are "labouring after perfection[t]," though we know we are not able to attain it? Moreover, is all this manifest to those around us, and especially to those who are most conversant with us in our daily walk? Do they see, and can they testify in our behalf, that this is indeed the constant habit of our minds, and the uniform tenour of our life? Do they see a marked difference between us and the world around us; and that we are, in fact, "lights in a dark world, holding forth in our conversation the word of life[u];" and proving to every beholder the truth of our profession by the consistency of our conduct? Let us not put away from us these searching inquiries; let us not turn away from them as though this change were unattainable, or as though we could be saved without it. Let us remember what is at issue, and how deeply we are interested in it. *I want to know whether I am Christ's; I want to know whether, if I were to die this day, Christ would acknowledge me as his;* or whether I have not reason rather to fear, that he would say to me, "Depart from me; I never knew you[x]."

I am aware that some will endeavour to evade these

[q] 1 Cor. ii. 2. [r] Gal. vi. 14. [s] 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.
[t] 2 Cor. xiii. 9. [u] Phil. ii. 16. [x] Matt. vii. 23.

things, by saying that we require too much. Then I demand, which of these things can be dispensed with? Can repentance? Can faith? Can obedience? There is not a person here who does not know, that not one of these things can be neglected, but to the certain destruction of our souls. Again, I ask, which of these things can be wrought in us by our own power; or for which of them is not the operation of the Holy Spirit necessary? If repentance can be wrought effectually in you by any power of your own, prove it.—If faith in Christ can, prove it.—If obedience to his commandments can, prove it. But be careful not to mistake the shadow for the substance. Think not that the *saying* that you possess these things, or that you intend hereafter to attain them, will suffice. You must *possess* them; you must possess them *in reality;* you must possess them *now,* if you would have any scriptural evidence that you are Christ's, or any well-founded hope of dwelling with Christ in the eternal world. I charge you before God that you examine, every one of you, your present state, and that you defer not any longer the attainment of the things on which your everlasting salvation depends. Think, I pray you, *if ye are not Christ's, whose are ye?* Fearful thought! I pray God that no one amongst you may ever have to learn this by bitter experience; but that all of you may, from this moment, lay it to heart, and improve, whilst yet ye may, this day of your salvation! I tremble, lest in any of you this day of grace be terminated by death; and, when ye are vainly hoping for acceptance with Christ as his peculiar people, Satan should lay claim to you as *his* vassals, and possess you for ever, sad trophies of his victorious power, and wretched monuments of his malignant sway.

And now, in conclusion, may God send down his Holy Spirit upon you all "to bear testimony to the word of his grace[y]," which has been delivered to you, and render it "the power of God to the salvation of your souls[z]!" Amen and Amen.

[y] Acts xiv. 3. [z] Rom. i. 16.

MDCCCLXVI.

THE SPIRIT'S WORK IN BELIEVERS.

Rom. viii. 9. *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

IN entering on this closing part of our subject, I feel peculiar difficulty, not from any want of scriptural and incontrovertible materials, but from the very nature of those materials which, being wholly of an experimental nature, can only commend themselves to those who, by actual experience, are qualified to judge of them. There are, as we all know, different kinds of life—vegetable, animal, and rational—each rising above the other, and each, in its order, evincing a manifest superiority above that which is below it. But there is a fourth kind of life, of which the Scripture speaks; viz. a spiritual life, which rises as far above the rest, as any one of them does above another. All have their proper powers, which, however, they cannot exceed. The vegetable life has productiveness, but no consciousness nor activity. The anima life has feeling, but no perception of the deductions of reason. The rational life apprehends moral truth; but forms no just conception of things which are spiritual. The spiritual life is exercised on things that are matters of pure revelation, which reason is not of itself able to apprehend.

But I wish to guard against a common misapprehension respecting this spiritual life. It is by no means correct to speak of it as constituting a new *sense;* for then it would be a man's misfortune only, and not his fault, if he did not possess it. But it is correct to say, that the spiritual man has a spiritual *perception,* which the natural man does not possess. The merely rational man has a film before his eyes; he views things through the medium of sense, and not of faith; and the medium through which he looks at objects, distorts them, if it do not altogether hide them from his sight. But in the spiritual man, the Holy Spirit, as "eye-salve," clears away the film[a],

[a] Rev. iii. 18.

and enables him to discern things as they really are. Faith also assists him, by bringing remote objects with greater clearness to his mind. The power of the telescope to bring to our view things that are invisible to the naked eye, is well known. Now this is the office and effect of faith, which enables us, if I may so speak, to behold both God himself, and the hidden mysteries of God[b], and to obtain a clear perception of things which are altogether beyond the reach of the eye of sense. Hence it appears that the merely rational man labours under a twofold disadvantage in comparison of the spiritual man: he looks through a dense medium of sense, which distorts, or altogether conceals, the objects before him; and he wants that peculiar glass of faith, which would present them truly, and bring them, if I may so say, directly upon the retina of his mind. This is what St. John means, when he says, "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not[c];" and this is, in very explicit terms, declared by St. Paul to be a matter of universal experience[d]. "The natural man (whoever he may be) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him (being seen by him only in a distorted view): neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (and he wants that spiritual perception, whereby alone he can truly apprehend them). But he that is spiritual, judgeth all things (having a clear and just perception of them); yet he himself is judged of no man (for it were a downright absurdity for a blind man to sit in judgment on one who sees); For who (*i.e.* what merely natural man) hath known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct *him* (the spiritual man)? But *we* (we who are spiritual) *have* the mind of Christ" (and are, therefore, able to judge both ourselves and others).

But whilst, in order to guard against misapprehension, I speak thus, I well know that there are many, very many, in the midst of us, who can form the most accurate judgment of all we say, and who, if not in

[b] Heb. xi. 27. [c] John i. 5. [d] 1 Cor. ii. 14—16.

relation to every *word*, will yet, *as a whole*, set their seal to the truth of it; and, therefore, I hesitate not to lay before you what I verily believe to be in perfect accordance with God's revealed will, though on a subject so recondite and mysterious.

I am not, however, without a consciousness, and with deep grief I utter it, that, under a profession of bringing forth only scriptural truth, some give vent to the veriest absurdities, talking about dreams and visions, and arrogating to themselves I know not what claims of preternatural endowments. But against all such fancies and conceits I would enter my most solemn protest. The truth of God, though elevated above reason, is in perfect accordance with reason; and by *its reasonableness as a part of divine revelation* would I wish every word that I utter to be tried. I ask nothing more than this; that as God, of his own sovereign will and pleasure, bestows on some greater *natural* gifts than on others, so he may act in reference to *spiritual* gifts: and that, as all our natural faculties are called forth into action by things *visible*, our hopes and fears, and joys and sorrows, being excited by them according to the interest we have in them, so our spiritual faculties may be called into action by things *invisible*, even by all the wonders of redeeming love, according as the blessings of redemption are manifested to the soul, and our interest in them is made the one subject of our present and prospective happiness.

Having premised thus much, I now come to shew, in the *fourth* and last place,

IV. *What the Holy Spirit will work in us when we are Christ's.* We must never forget that the Holy Spirit unites with the Lord Jesus Christ in the whole of his mediatorial office, though each sustains and executes in a more appropriate way that part which has been assigned him by the Father: and, if any of us be "washed, and justified, and sanctified, it is in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God[•]." But it is the Spirit's office to which I must

[•] 1 Cor. vi. 11.

confine myself: and whilst I address myself to this arduous and momentous subject, may the Lord Jesus Christ himself "be with us," as he has promised[f], and "baptize us with the Holy Ghost and with fire[g]," to consume the dross that is within us[h], and to kindle in our hearts an inextinguishable flame of love towards his blessed name!

The Holy Spirit then will perform in us the offices of *a Teacher, a Sanctifier,* and *a Comforter.*

Let us view him first as a *Teacher.*

The young convert knows little beyond "the first principles of the oracles of God[i]." He is like a person just landed on a newly-discovered country, the beauty and riches of which he has yet to learn. But the Holy Spirit of Christ will open things to us, even as the Lord Jesus himself did when on earth to his Disciples, gradually, as we are able to bear them; and with increased knowledge, he will give us "senses proportionably exercised to discern good and evil[k]," and thus will "lead us on to perfection[l]." The fundamental doctrine of salvation by faith is known by us when we first come to Christ. But there is much which as yet is very indistinctly seen. For instance, the nature and difficulty of the Christian warfare is yet but very partially discovered. The deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the human heart is but little known; (in fact, who but God can know it to its full extent[m]) "the deceitfulness of sin[n]" also is by no means clearly discerned. As for "the devices of Satan[o]," the young believer is still "ignorant of them" to a great extent; and of "the wiles" whereby that subtle adversary deludes the souls of men, he has scarcely any conception[p]. Little does he imagine what power that old serpent has to "beguile the minds of the simple[q]," and "to corrupt them, even as he deceived our mother Eve, from the simplicity that is in Christ[r]." Armour is provided for him against

[f] Matt. xxviii. 20. [g] Matt. iii. 11. [h] Isai. iv. 4.
[i] Heb. v. 12. [k] Heb. v. 14. [l] Heb. vi. 1.
[m] Jer. xvii. 9. [n] Heb. iii. 13. [o] 2 Cor. ii. 11.
[p] Eph. vi. 11. [q] Rom. xvi. 18. [r] 2 Cor. xi. 3.

that great enemy of souls[s]; but he knows not yet how to use it, so as to defeat him, who is but too justly called Apollyon[t]." He has in his hand "the word, which is the sword of the Spirit[u];" but he knows not how to use it with effect: "he is unskilful in the word of righteousness[x]." It is not till after many conflicts that he learns, what are the parts on which he is most open to assault, what are the stratagems whereby that wily adversary most successfully ensnares him, and what are the means by which he is to ensure the victory over all his assailants. In the spiritual warfare, as in that which is temporal, experience can be gained only by active service. There is however this difference between them: in temporal warfare, proficiency is the result of human ingenuity; whereas, in the spiritual warfare, it is the Spirit of God alone that can inspire us with the knowledge and address, whereby we are to vanquish the legions of spirits that are combined against us[y].

But, further, the Holy Spirit will also discover to us the fulness and excellency of the Gospel salvation. The plan of salvation is, as I have already acknowledged, understood by the veriest babe in Christ. But the excellency of it will be more and more deloped to him, till, from the obscurity of the morning dawn, he attains the fuller light of the meridian sun; according as it is written by the prophet; "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: *his goings forth are prepared as the morning*[z];" and as Solomon also has assured us, "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day[a]." The young Christian knows little of that covenant to which all our salvation must ultimately be traced; the covenant entered into between the Father and the Son for the redemption of our fallen race; the covenant, wherein Christ, on the one part, undertook to stand in our place and stead, and to endure, in his own person,

[s] Eph. vi. 13. [t] Rev. ix. 11. [u] Eph. vi. 17.
[x] Heb. v. 13. [y] Eph. vi. 17, 18. [z] Hos. vi. 3.
[a] Prov. iv. 18.

the penalty which he had incurred; and the Father, on the other part, both gave unto him a chosen people[b], and engaged to accept them as righteous, on account of what he should do and suffer for them. "This covenant is ordered in all things, and sure:" and the blessings of it are all treasured up for us in Christ, our great head and representative[c], and are thus secured to us for ever: as it is written, "Our life is hid with Christ in God: and therefore, when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory[d]. These blessings, too, are to be received from him[e] simply "through the exercise of faith, that thus they may be sure to all the seed[f];" for no human being could ever have hoped to possess them, if they had been committed to any other depository, or if the attainment of them had been suspended on the strength and fidelity of man.

To unfold these things to the soul is the Holy Spirit's office. For this end he is given to us as "an unction that shall abide with us," and that shall, to a certain degree, by the clearness of his communications, supersede the necessity for human instruction[g]; and, being given to us for this end, he enables the believer gradually to dive more and more deeply into this mystery, which the human eye cannot penetrate, at least not so penetrate as to behold its excellency[h]. These are among "the deep things of God, which the Spirit alone searches," even the things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived, but which are revealed to the soul by the Spirit of God[i], and can be known in no other way[k]. True, these things are written plainly in the inspired volume, even as the figures are engraven with the utmost possible plainness on the sun-dial: but both in the one case, and in the other, are they written in vain, till light is vouchsafed from heaven to shine upon them: then only does the gnomon

[b] John xvii. 2, 6, 9, 11, 12, 24. [c] Col. ii. 9.
[d] Col. iii. 3, 4. [e] John i. 16. [f] Rom. iv. 16.
[g] 1 John ii. 27. [h] Eph. i. 17, 18. [i] 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.
[k] 1 Cor. ii. 11, 12.

perform its office in the one; and then only is the end answered for the illumination of the soul in the other. Till that take place, "the natural man, how learned soever he be in other respects, will never discern aright the things of the Spirit of God: they will be no better than foolishness unto him."

The believer, thus taught of God, has a knowledge of the Deity, of which he had scarcely the slightest notion before. What astonishing views has he of the wisdom of God in devising such a plan, whereby God's own justice might be duly satisfied, and his mercy flow down to man in perfect consistency with all his other attributes! When he contemplates the goodness of God, thus exercised; the holiness of God, thus honoured; and the truth of God, thus kept inviolate; and all the perfections of God, thus harmonizing and glorified; and all this for HIM; he is perfectly astounded; he knows not how to believe it; it seems to him all as "a mere parable[l]." But seeing how suited all this is to his necessities, and how sufficient for his wants, and that, in any other way than this, he could find no more ground of hope for himself than for the fallen angels, he is *forced* to believe it; he sees that it is revealed in the Bible as with a sun-beam, and established by evidence that admits not of the slightest doubt: and when he sees further, that it has a transforming efficacy upon all who receive it, he is *constrained* to receive it as the very truth of God, and to say, "Lord, to whom else shall we go? Thou, even thou only, hast the words of eternal life;" and "we believe and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God[m]."

I merely give these things as samples only of what the Holy Spirit will effect in the believing soul as a *Teacher;* for the same powerful agency is extended to every part of divine truth, and every part, also, of christian experience, seeing that he is expressly promised to "guide us into *all* truth[n]," that so, by his effectual teaching, "we may know all things[o]."

[l] Ezek. xx. 49.
[m] John vi. 68, 69.
[n] John xvi. 13.
[o] 1 John ii. 20.

But we will next consider his operations, unde the office of a *Sanctifier*. In this view we speak of him in our catechism, as "sanctifying the elect people of God." In fact, all that he does as a Teacher, is in order to his work as a Sanctifier. Does he "reveal Christ in us," so as to give us brighter views of his person, and a more comprehensive knowledge of his work and offices? it is, that "we, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, may be changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord[p]." Does he further enable us to "comprehend the breadth and length, and depth and height, and to know with progressive clearness and certainty the love of Christ which passeth knowledge? it is, that we may be thereby "filled with all the fulness of God[q]." With increasing knowledge he gives an increase of spiritual perception; and with that perception, a spiritual appetite; and with that appetite, a spiritual attainment; and this continues to advance, till "the soul with all its powers is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ[r]." I think the whole process, though above the conception of the highest archangel, may, for all practical purposes, be brought down to the apprehension of a child. Our blessed Lord compares it to the wind, which is mighty in operation, but visible only in its effects. "It blows when and where it listeth, but we cannot tell either whence it comes, or whither it goes[s];" yet of its agency we have no doubt whatever. The veriest child acknowledges it, whilst the wisest philosopher is unable adequately to explain it. The magnet would furnish us with a similar illustration of this truth; for its influence, if not rendered visible by actual experience, would not be credited. But there is another natural process which will give us a fuller, and, perhaps I may say, a more distinct, apprehension of this mysterious subject. A river flowing from its source in one current to the ocean, may serve to shew us the natural man, with all his faculties, both of

[p] 2 Cor. iii. 18.
[q] Eph. iii. 18, 19.
[r] 2 Cor. x. 5.
[s] John iii. 8.

body and mind, departing from God, and proceeding with fatal indifference and perseverance, till he is finally lost in that abyss from whence there is no return. But, within a certain distance from the sea, we may behold that same river arrested in its course by the tide, and returning with equal rapidity towards its fountain-head: and in that we may behold the sinner returning to his God. Even from the partial back-currents which are occasioned by local obstacles, we may behold the parallel yet more strikingly illustrated: for in either case, these may serve to shew, that, as in man's departure from God there are some risings of compunction, and some little, though ineffectual, restraints, from the remonstrances of an accusing conscience; so, in the believer's return to God, there are some remnants of corruption, which betray a want of that completeness of soul, which he will enjoy in a better world. But the point particularly to be noticed is, How is this change effected? How is it effected in the river? Is it through the power and instrumentality of man? No: it is by the invisible, but powerful, attraction of the moon. The operation of the moon is not seen but in its effects: yet it is not on that account denied: the effects are unquestionable; nor can they reasonably be traced to any other cause; at all events they cannot in the smallest possible degree be ascribed to man. And how is the change effected upon the souls of men? It is the Holy Spirit who operates upon them to bring them back to God. True, his operations are not seen, except in the effects produced by them: but those effects infinitely exceed all human power: and in the unerring word of God they are ascribed to the Holy Spirit, whose peculiar office it is, not only to regenerate us at first, but progressively to form us after the Divine image, and to render us meet for our heavenly inheritance[t]. That there are defects in the best of men is certain; but that only makes the analogy more complete. There are, and will be, intervening obstacles, that will, at

[t] Tit. iii. 3, 5.

some times, and under peculiar circumstances, interfere with the believer's progress[u]: but these do not interrupt his general course, or give any just cause for questioning the influence under which he moves[x]. His habitual "walk is, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit[y]." We have said, that the work is progressive. He goes from grace to grace[z], from victory to victory, "growing up into Christ in all things, till he arrive at the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ[a]." At first he is represented in the Scriptures as "a child, then as a young man, and then as a father[b]:" and the work in his soul is compared to the corn, which appears first in "the blade, then in the ear, and then as the full corn in the ear[c]." These very comparisons shew, that the believer is not at first all that he will be at a future period: his heart will be more and more weaned from earthly things, and with more and more intensity be fixed on things above, till he is altogether "changed into the image of his God in righteousness and true holiness[d]." This advance towards maturity will be more or less visible to all around him. There will be in him more solidity, more uniformity, more consistency. His principles will be more and more commended to all around him by their efficacy to "beautify his soul[e]," and to adorn his life[f]. In a word, he will be renewed, not in his mind only, but "in *the spirit of his mind*[g]," and will become "an epistle of Christ known and read of all men," an epistle not "written by any human hand, but by the Spirit of the living God[h]." He will be in himself, and will constrain all who know him to acknowledge that he is, what the Scriptures emphatically call, "A MAN OF GOD[i]."

And what is the result of all this? What, but that *in* and *by* the whole of this work, the Holy Spirit performs the office of *a Comforter*? Under this

[u] Rom. vii. 18, 19. [x] Rom. vii. 21—24. [y] Rom. viii. 1, 5.
[z] 2 Pet. iii. 18. [a] Eph. iv. 7, 13. [b] 1 John ii. 12—14.
[c] Mark iv. 28. [d] Eph. iv. 24. [e] Ps. cxlix. 4.
[f] 1 Pet. iii. 3, 4. [g] Eph. iv. 23. [h] 2 Cor. iii. 2, 3.
[i] 2 Tim. iii. 17.

character, "the world know him not, neither can receive him: but believers do know him; for he dwelleth with them, and shall be in them[k]" throughout the whole of their earthly pilgrimage. Even at their first coming to Christ, the Holy Spirit, in some measure, dischargeth this office, speaking peace to their troubled consciences, and enabling them to rejoice in their unseen, but beloved Saviour[l]. This was eminently conspicuous on the day of Pentecost, when the whole multitude of believers, who had just before been filled with terror, "ate their bread with gladness and singleness of heart, blessing and praising God[m]." But through the whole course of their future life, he carries on this work, revealing Christ more and more clearly to them, and applying the promises with sweet assurance to their souls. Hence the word so applied is said to "work by the power of the Spirit of God[n]," and to "come to men, not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance[o];" and the Holy Ghost himself is called "the Holy Spirit of promise[p]," because in this way he makes use of the promises for their good. Thus he performs the office of a Comforter towards Christ's redeemed people: he gives them near "access to God" in prayer[q]; and in their supplications "helps their infirmities[r]," and "makes intercession for them, and in them, according to the will of God[s]." He is in them a Spirit of adoption, enabling them to go to God with confidence, crying, Abba, Father[t]; and, "shedding abroad God's love in their hearts[u]," he "witnesses with their spirits, that they are children of God[x]." In this way, also, he establishes them in Christ[y], and "seals them unto the day of redemption[z]," and "is within them an earnest of their heavenly inheritance[a]." "An earnest" is *a part of* a

[k] John xiv. 16, 17. [l] 1 Pet. i. 8. [m] Acts ii. 46.
[n] Rom. xv. 19. [o] 1 Thess. i. 5. [p] Eph. i. 13.
[q] Eph. ii. 18. [r] Rom. viii. 26. and Jude, ver. 20.
[s] Rom. viii. 27. [t] Rom. viii. 15. [u] Rom. v. 5.
[x] Rom. viii. 16. [y] 2 Cor. i. 21.
[z] 2 Cor. i. 22. with Eph. i. 17. [a] Eph. i. 14.

payment, and *a pledge of* the remainder; and such is the Holy Spirit in the believer's soul, giving him already, in possession, a measure of the heavenly felicity, and assuring to him, in due season, the full and everlasting possession of it. In a season of affliction especially do the communications of his grace abound. We read of those who "received the word with much affliction, and joy of the Holy Ghost[b];" and "in proportion as any person's afflictions abound, the Holy Ghost will make his consolations to abound" with still greater and more transcendent efficacy[c].

It is worthy, however, of observation, that the comforts which he administers at an earlier, and at a more advanced period, are, for the most part, widely different; the one being rather of a tumultuous nature, the other more serene; the one more transient, the other more abiding; the one elevating the spirits of a man on account of the good that has accrued to him; the other humbling and abasing his soul, on account of his great unworthiness: the one is a fire recently kindled, in which there is a considerable mixture of flame and smoke; the other like a fire that has become bright and solid, and burns with an unobtrusive, but mighty, efficacy. In confirmation of what I have said, I need only add, that this is the very description which God himself has given us of his kingdom: that it "consists not in externals of any kind, but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost[d]."

And now, will any one say that these blessings were peculiar to the apostolic age, and are not to be expected by us? What then is the meaning of that interrogation, which St. Paul addressed to the whole Corinthian Church, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that *the Spirit of God dwelleth in you*[e]?" And, again, "Know ye not your ownselves, how that *Jesus Christ is in you*, except ye be reprobates[f]?" Hence it is evident, that this is a truth, of

[b] 1 Thess. i. 6. [c] 2 Cor. i. 5. [d] Rom. xiv. 17.
[e] 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. [f] 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

which we must not only have the actual experience, but a consciousness also, that it is realized in us: and the man who questions it as a matter of Christian experience, has yet to learn the very first principles of the Christian faith: for even to the murderers of our Lord did St. Peter on the day of Pentecost announce, that this blessing should be theirs; and *that* too even to their latest posterity: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost: for the promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call[g]." In fact, this is the promise which was originally made to Abraham for himself and all his believing posterity, whether of the Jewish or Gentile world, even "*the promise of the Spirit through faith*[h]."

This objection therefore being set aside, I confidently ask whether I have carried any one of these matters to excess, either requiring more than the Scriptures require, or promising more than the Scriptures promise? I can truly say, that I have exercised all possible caution on this head. I know and lament, that there are crude and enthusiastic conceits entertained by some, who would have us believe that they are actuated by certain divine impulses, irrespective of the word as the medium of conveying them, and in despite of the vanity and folly which they themselves betray as their invariable result. But I trust, that not one word that I have spoken can be thought to have countenanced any such conceits as these. The written word is the medium by which the Spirit works, and the standard by which his agency must be tried: and, if his operations do not produce holiness, as well as light and comfort, they are no better than a delusion, a desperate and a fatal delusion. The offices of the Holy Spirit cannot be separated from each other. He is a Teacher, a Sanctifier, and a Comforter: and I advisedly place the office of a Sanctifier between the other two, because it is equally connected

[g] Acts ii. 38, 39. [h] Gal. iii. 14.

both with that which precedes, and with that which follows;—with that which precedes, as the end for which divine teaching is administered, and with that which follows, as that without which no true comfort can possibly exist. I entreat, then, that you will all look for the gift of the Holy Spirit, to impart to you these blessings: and, I declare before God, that no one of you will ever behold the face of God in peace, if you do not both desire and obtain the Holy Spirit for these ends. The word of God is immutable; "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

If any be disposed to deride the sacred influences of the Spirit, imputing to Satan, as it were, what is wrought by the Holy Ghost, let them beware of the sin against the Holy Ghost; for they tread close upon it, if they do not actually commit it. I would have them remember, that, *in proportion to the light against which they offend, and the malignity with which they utter their scoffs, they approach this fatal sin:* and, if once they do commit it, our blessed Lord declares, that "they shall never have forgiveness, either in this world, or in the world to come; and that they are therefore in danger of eternal damnation[l]."

On the other hand, if any have experienced the workings of the Holy Spirit to bring them to Christ, let them watch and pray against temptation and sin of every kind, lest by any open or secret declension from the ways of God, they "grieve[k]" and "vex the Holy Spirit[l]," and "quench" his sacred motions[m], and thus "their last end become worse than their beginning[n]."

But "I hope better things of this assembly, though I thus speak[o]." Scoffers do not abound at this day as once they did. The truths of the Gospel are better understood, and its mysteries are more justly appreciated: and, provided only the deep things of God be stated with modesty and sobriety, they find a favourable acceptance now, where once, perhaps,

[l] Matt. xii. 32, and Mark iii. 28, 29.
[l] Isai. lxiii. 10.
[n] 2 Pet. ii. 20.
[k] Eph. iv. 30.
[m] 1 Thess. v. 19.
[o] Heb. vi. 9.

they would only have provoked a smile. On that head, therefore, I feel no occasion to dwell. But this very circumstance, which renders a profession of piety more easy, makes the danger of departing from it more imminent; since, as in the case of the stony-ground hearers, that which is hastily received, is but too often as hastily relinquished[p]. To every one of you then I say, "Hold fast that thou hast, that no man take thy crown[q];" or rather, look to the Lord Jesus Christ for more enlarged "supplies of his Spirit[r]:" for "He has received this gift for men, even for the most rebellious[s]: and as "God has not given the Spirit by measure unto *him*[t]," so is there no measure fixed for the dispensation of it to *us*. It is our privilege, not only to "*have* the Spirit," but to "*be filled with* the Spirit[u]." Many of you, I would hope, "have already received the first-fruits of the Spirit[x]:" but be not satisfied with these. "Christ came, not only that you might have life, but that you might have it more abundantly[y]." He has promised to "pour floods upon those who are thirsty[z]." Yes, he would have you to "live in the Spirit[a]," and "walk in the Spirit[b]," and "purify your souls by the Spirit[c]," and "abound in hope through the Spirit[d]:" and be filled with "joy in the Holy Ghost[e]." See to it, then, that you avail yourselves of these immense advantages; and beg of God to "pour out his Spirit more and more abundantly upon you through Jesus Christ[f]," that, being "led in all things by the Spirit, ye may *be*, and give decisive evidence that ye *are*, the children of God[g]." And may "the Holy Spirit be so richly poured out upon us from on high, that this our wilderness may become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be so luxuriant as to be counted for a forest[h]!"

[p] Matt. xii. 20, 21.
[q] Rev. iii. 11.
[r] Phil. i. 19.
[s] Ps. lxviii. 18.
[t] John iii. 34.
[u] Eph. v. 18.
[x] Rom. viii. 23.
[y] John x. 10.
[z] Isai. xliv. 3.
[a] Gal. v. 25.
[b] Gal. v. 25.
[c] 1 Pet. i. 22.
[d] Rom. xv. 13.
[e] Acts xii. 52.
[f] Tit. iii. 6.
[g] Rom. viii. 14.
[h] Isai. xxxii. 15.

MDCCCLXVII.

GOD'S DWELLING IN US IS A MOTIVE TO HOLINESS.

Rom. viii. 12. *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.*

IN the Scriptures, privilege and duty are inseparably connected. By this means we are kept at an equal distance from presumptuous confidence and painful servility; and the best feelings of the soul are rendered subservient to our eternal welfare. This observation is verified, as in many other passages[a], so particularly in that before us; which is a conclusion from very important premises.

We propose to consider,

I. The grounds of the conclusion—

Believers have God himself dwelling in them—

[God is here represented as a Triune God[b]; and he dwells in all his believing people[c]. This is a most inestimable privilege to them[d].]

By means of this they enjoy the richest blessings—

[*Their souls* are quickened from their death in trespasses and sins, and, by a new principle of life infused into them, are enabled to live unto God: and this "life they have because of Christ's righteousness" wrought out for them, and imputed to them. *Their bodies* also, though doomed to "death, as the penalty of sin," "will be raised again by that very Spirit who now dwelleth in them:" and these shall participate with the soul the glory and felicity of the heavenly world.]

[a] Rom. xii. 1. and 1 Cor. vi. 20. with the two verses preceding the text.

[b] The Father raised Christ: Christ dwells in all believers at the same instant: and the Holy Ghost will raise the saints at the last day. Can any one of these be less than God? Their distinction and equality may be further proved from Matt. xxviii. 19. It is observable also that in ver. 9. the Spirit of Christ is called the Spirit of God.

[c] 2 Cor. vi. 16. 1 John i. 3. and 2 Cor. xiii. 14. They do not indeed pretend to distinguish the agency of one of these divine persons from that of another (for indeed no one of these persons acts separately from the others) but they exercise faith on the Father, as their protector and governor; on the Son, as their mediator and advocate; and on the Spirit, as their guide and comforter.

[d] Far greater than that mentioned 1 Kings viii. 27.

Such being the premises from which the conclusion is drawn, we proceed to consider,

II. The conclusion itself—

We certainly are "debtors to the flesh" to a certain degree—

[The flesh cannot subsist without care and labour; and whatever is necessary for the preservation of life, or the restoration of our health, it is our bounden duty to do.]

But we are not debtors to obey its dictates—

[To "live after" the flesh, must import a consulting of its ease, a complying with its solicitations, a devoting of ourselves to its interests: to this extent we certainly are not debtors to the flesh.]

This may plainly be concluded, as from many other topics, so especially from the foregoing statement—

[*The privileges* vouchsafed to us strongly prohibit a carnal life. Can the Triune God, who dwells in us, be pleased with our living after the flesh? Is not the very intent of his mercies to bring us rather to live after the Spirit? *The mercies* too which we enjoy by means of those privileges, teach us the same divine lesson. The quickening of our spirit should lead us to "mind the things of the Spirit." And the prospect of endless felicity and glory for the body should keep us from seeking its present gratifications to the destruction of its eternal interests. To whomsoever we are debtors, we are not (in this extent at least) debtors to the flesh.]

INFER—

1. How mistaken are the world in their course of life!—

[The generality live as if they had nothing to do but to consult the flesh; and when exhorted to mind the concerns of their souls, reply immediately, "I *must* attend to the interests of my body." But in thus opposing the declaration in the text, they will ruin their bodies as well as their souls for ever.]

2. How unmindful are even good people of their duty and interest!—

[The best of men find it difficult to "keep under their bodies;" and there are seasons when they are apt to yield to sloth or sensual indulgence: but let all remember their obligations and professions, and labour rather to pay what they owe to the Spirit.]

MDCCCLXVIII.

MORTIFICATION OF SIN.

Rom. viii. 13. *If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*

IT is of infinite importance to know our state as it is before God, and to ascertain on scriptural grounds, what our condition will be in the eternal world. Numberless are the passages of God's word which will afford us the desired information; but there is not in the whole inspired volume one declaration more explicit than that before us. It presents to our view two momentous truths, which, as they admit not of any clearer division or arrangement, we shall consider in their order.

I. A carnal life will terminate in everlasting misery—

To "live after the flesh" is to make the gratifying of our corrupt nature the great scope and end of our lives—

[The "flesh" does not relate merely to the body, but to the whole of our corrupt nature. It is used to signify that innate principle of sin, which governs the unregenerate, and continually fights against the spiritual principle in those that are regenerate[a]. And its fruits comprehend the actings of the mind, no less than those of the body[b]. To "live after" this corrupt principle, is, to be governed by it in all our deliberations and pursuits. It signifies nothing what may be the immediate path which we choose for ourselves, provided our main object be to gratify ourselves. One may seek pleasure, another riches, another honour, another the knowledge of arts and sciences; but if they have no higher end of life than to attain these things, they all equally live after the flesh[c].]

The consequence of such a life will be eternal death—

[The death mentioned in the text cannot relate to the mere death of the body, because that must be experienced by the spiritual, no less than by the carnal man. It must import that death of the soul, which is emphatically called the second

[a] John iii. 6. Gal. v. 17. [b] Gal. v. 19, 20.
[c] Compare ver. 5. with Phil. iii. 19.

death[d]. Nor can there be a doubt but that this will be the fruit and consequence of a carnal life. And shall this be thought an hard saying? Surely not: for such a sentence is only a repetition of what the person has before passed upon himself: he has *practically* said to God, "Depart from me; I desire not the knowledge of thy ways[e]; I will be a god to myself[f], and make myself happy in my own way." God replies to him, "Thou wouldest none of me; and thou shalt have none of me; depart from me for evermore[g]." The very state in which they lived, was a state of spiritual death[h]; no wonder therefore that it terminates in everlasting death.]

As a counterpoise to the apparent severity of this truth, the Apostle adds, that,

II. A life of mortification and self-denial shall terminate in everlasting happiness—

To mortify our corrupt nature ought to be the continual aim of our lives—

[The "deeds of the body" are of the same import with "the flesh" in the preceding clause. Our corrupt nature is often represented as a body, because it has many parts or members whereby it acts[i]. This we should endeavour to mortify in its outward actings, and in its inmost motions. As it consists principally in making SELF our idol, we must watch against it, and labour to bring it into subjection, that God in all things may be glorified by us. If we search our own hearts, we shall see a continual proneness to self-seeking, self-pleasing, and self-dependence. But instead of gratifying this propensity, we should make God's will the rule, and his honour the end, of our actions. We must therefore maintain a warfare against it, and resist it manfully, till it be subdued[k].]

This however cannot be done effectually but by the assistance of the Holy Spirit—

[We can walk after the flesh without any difficulty: it is natural to us, as it is to a stone to run down a precipice. But to mortify the flesh, is impossible to man: it can be effected only by the mighty working of that power, which raised Christ himself from the dead[l]: yea, the inclination, as well as the ability, to mortify it is the gift of God[m]. This however is no

[d] Rev. xx. 14. [e] Job xxi. 14, 15. [f] Ps. xii. 4.
[g] Compare Ps. lxxxi. 11. with Matt. xxv. 41. [h] ver. 6.
[i] Rom. vii. 24. Col. ii. 11. [k] 1 Cor. ix. 27
[l] Eph. i. 19, 20. and 1 Pet. i. 22. with the text.
[m] Phil. ii. 13.

excuse for our subjection to the flesh, since the Holy Spirit shall be given to all that ask it at God's hands[n].]

The consequence of successfully combating the flesh shall be unspeakably blessed—

[If eternal death be the fruit of self-indulgence, eternal life shall be the fruit of self-denial. There is this difference indeed; that whereas the former is the *wages* due to sin, the latter is the *gift* of God through Christ[o]. We may well wonder at this marvellous grace of God, who has annexed such glorious consequences to our poor and feeble endeavours. But he delighteth in mercy, and will not suffer us to exert ourselves in vain.]

By way of IMPROVEMENT we shall add a word,

1. Of reproof—

[Suppose it had been written, "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall *go to heaven*;" could the generality take any surer way to obtain the blessing, than that which they now pursue? And whence is it that, in direct opposition to the word of God, they can go on so confidently and so securely? The reason is, that Satan suggests to them, as he did to our first parents, "Ye shall not surely die." But shall we believe Satan in opposition to God? Did not the crediting of Satan ruin the whole world? and will it not eventually ruin us also? Be it known then that we have but this alternative, *mortification*, or *damnation*. Either sin must be our enemy, or God will. If therefore we would not perish for ever, let us immediately begin, in dependence on God's Spirit, to "mortify our earthly members[p]:" for it is an eternal truth, that, "if we live after the flesh, we shall die."]

2. Of caution—

[We are in great danger of mistaking the nature and extent of that mortification which is required of us in the text. We may be restrained from sin by the influence of education, as Joash[q]; or put away many sins, as Herod[r]; or set ourselves for a time against our besetting sin, as Judas under the terrors of a guilty conscience[s]; (as a mariner may cast all his goods out of his ship to save the vessel, without any aversion to the goods themselves) or may exchange our sins, prodigality for avarice, sensuality for self-righteousness, or the love of vanity for sloth and indifference. But all this falls very far short of our duty: we must not be lopping off branches; but must lay our axe to the root. The besetting

[n] Luke xi. 13. [o] Rom. vi. 23. [p] Col. iii. 5.
[q] 2 Chron. xxiv. 2. [r] Mark vi. 17, 20, 27. [s] Matt. xxvii. 3, 4.

sin, though dear as a right eye, or needful as a right hand, must be cut off; at least, its dominion must be destroyed, and its motions be incessantly resisted[t]. In short, to root out sin, and to serve, honour, and enjoy God, must be our daily business, our unintermitted employment. Nor must we ever think that we belong to Christ, till we have the testimony of our conscience, that we are thus crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts[u].]

3. Of encouragement—

[As we have ruined ourselves, God might well leave us to restore ourselves: and then indeed would our condition be most pitiable. But he graciously offers us the assistance of his Spirit; so that none need despair: none need to decline the work of mortification for want of strength to accomplish it; seeing that "the grace of Christ is sufficient for us," and through the aids of his Spirit we can do all things[x]: yea, "his strength shall be perfected in our weakness." Let every one then address himself to the work: "Have not I commanded thee? saith the Lord: be strong, therefore, and of a good courage; for the Lord thy God is with thee[y]:" "Be strong, and let not your hands be weak; for your work shall be rewarded[z]."]

[t] Mark ix. 43—48.
[u] Gal. v. 24.
[x] Gal. v. 16. and Phil. iv. 13.
[y] Josh. i. 9.
[z] 2 Chron. xv. 7.

MDCCCLXIX.

THE LEADINGS OF THE SPIRIT.

Rom. viii. 14. *As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*

THOUGH Christ's obedience unto death is the only meritorious ground of our salvation, yet it is certain that heaven is held forth to us as a prize which we are to attain by running, and as "a recompence of reward" which we are to gain by labour. Many shrink back at this idea, on account of the vast disproportion between the work and the reward: and well they may shrink back, if nothing be taken into the consideration but the intrinsic excellence of our works. But there is one point of view in which the disproportion will not appear so great, or perhaps

will altogether vanish. We know that a poor man thinks himself liberally paid for his labour, if, after toiling a whole week, he receive a pound or two for his trouble: but the child of a monarch would account himself very ill rewarded for such work, though he should be paid at a much higher rate. It is thus with respect to the point before us: if we be considered *as men*, the reward of eternal glory infinitely exceeds the labour of a few years of obedience: but, if we be considered *as children of the living God, and as performing our works through the agency of his Spirit*, the recompence of heaven is no more than what is suited to our rank and dignity. This seems to be the idea of the Apostle in the text: he has observed, that "if through the Spirit we mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live:" but, lest we should think it incredible that such a reward should follow a life of mortification, he assigns the reason of it; "*For* as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God;" and consequently, they may expect a reward suited to their high character, and to the dignity of the Spirit who worketh in them.

In discoursing on these words, we shall shew,

I. Who they are that are led by the Spirit—

It is obvious and undeniable that *all* are not; and indeed the very text intimates that their number is limited to a part only of mankind. To distinguish accurately who these are, is a matter of some difficulty: for though we may easily shew, what the Spirit will lead us *from*, or what he will lead us *to*, we shall speak to no purpose, unless we take such discriminating marks as are found in none but true Christians. To make the matter as clear as possible,

1. We will propose some marks, which, though found in all true Christians, are insufficient to distinguish them—

[A person is not necessarily led by the Spirit, *because he follows the dictates of his natural conscience.* Every true Christian consults his conscience, and obeys its voice: but others may do so as well as he. Cornelius was evidently a conscientious man; but did not become a Christian till St. Peter set before

him "words, whereby he and all his household should be saved[a]." If that instance be thought doubtful, we will adduce two others that admit of no doubt. The Rich Youth in the Gospel thought he had "kept all the commandments from his earliest youth:" and Paul, while he was a Jew, "had walked before God in all good conscience," and had been, "touching the righteousness of the law, blameless." But neither the one nor the other of these was led by the Spirit: the one renounced Christ rather than his riches[b]; and the other was converted only by a miraculous interposition of the Lord Jesus[c]. From hence it is evident that men may be honest, and upright, and conscientious, and yet have no just reason to conclude themselves children of God.

Again, a person is not necessarily led by the Spirit *because he has experienced a change in his views and affections. Doubtless*, every Christian has experienced such a change: but the like is said of "the stony-ground hearers;" who not only received the word so as to inform their understanding, but so as to kindle in their hearts a lively joy[d]. Though therefore we may be moved under a sermon, and find as much pleasure in it as Ezekiel's hearers[e], yet this is no satisfactory evidence of our conversion to God.

Further, a person is not necessarily led by the Spirit, *because he makes an open profession of religion.* For though every true Christian will confess Christ openly, yet "the thorny-ground hearers" also do the same; and it is worthy of notice, that they are represented as never relinquishing their profession[f]. Though therefore we may openly join ourselves to the Lord's people, and be numbered amongst them by others, and bear reproach for our attachment to them, and bring forth fruit which resembles theirs, yet all this will be no decisive proof that we are led by the Spirit, or that we have any part in the Christian's salvation.]

2. We will propose some marks which will distinguish the true Christian from every other person under heaven—

[We may be sure that we are led by the Spirit, *if we come daily to Christ as perishing sinners.* No formalist or hypocrite can do this: he may talk about it, but he cannot do it: he has not that brokenness of heart, that contrition, that sense of his extreme need of mercy, which are necessary to bring him thus to Christ. There is in all unconverted persons an insuperable reluctance to come to him in such an humiliating way, a reluctance that nothing but an Almighty power can overcome.

[a] Acts. xi. 14. [b] Matt. xix. 20—22. [c] Acts ix. 1—6.
[d] Matt. xiii. 20. [e] Ezek. xxxiii. 32. [f] Matt. xiii. 22.

Our Lord himself says, "No man can come unto me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him[g]." If therefore we are daily coming to Christ with self-lothing and self-abhorrence, and building all our hopes of salvation on the merit of his blood, we can affirm, on the testimony of Christ himself, that we are of those who are under the leadings of his Spirit.

Another mark whereby this point may be ascertained, is *our being willing to receive Christ as our Lord and Governor.* The unregenerate, however desirous of being saved from misery, cannot be prevailed on cordially to submit to the yoke of Christ. The declaration of St. Paul is, that "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost[h]." By this expression we must understand, not an incapacity to utter these words, but an incapacity to utter them cordially in reference to oneself. If therefore we be enabled cheerfully to sacrifice our own will, and if we seek unfeignedly to have "the very thoughts of our hearts brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ," we have another indisputable evidence that we are under the Spirit's influence and guidance.

A still further mark, which is also decisive on the point, is, *our mortifying of all sin without reserve.* The most specious hypocrite in the universe has some secret lust which he will not part with, and which he cannot, by any power of his own, subdue: "It is through the Spirit alone that we can mortify the deeds of the body[i]." If, then, there be no sin which we plead for; no sin, though dear as a right eye, or useful as a right hand, which we are not watching and labouring to destroy; it is evident, beyond all controversy, that we are led and strengthened by the Spirit of God.]

This point being ascertained, we proceed to notice,

II. The glorious state to which they are exalted—

It is almost incredible that sinners, like us, should ever become children of the Most High God; yet is it certain, that all who are led by the Spirit of God, are exalted to this state—

1. They are *brought into the relation* of children—

[Once they were "children of wrath," and "children of the wicked one:" but now they are adopted into God's family, and numbered amongst his children. Nor is it by adoption only that they stand thus related to him, but by regeneration also: for they are "begotten of God, even by the incorruptible seed, the word of God," and are made "partakers of a divine nature." Once they regarded God only as a Governor and a

[g] John vi. 44. [h] 1 Cor. xii. 3. [i] ver 13.

Judge; but now they have "a spirit of adoption given to them, whereby they can call him, Abba, Father." What an unspeakable honour is this! If David thought it "no light matter to be called the son-in-law of such a king" as Saul, what is it to be called the sons of the Most High God, the King of kings, and Lord of lords! — — —]

2. They *enjoy all the privileges* of children—

[What are the privileges which are annexed to that relation among men? Think of them; comprehend them all; and they will fall infinitely short of those which it is your happiness to enjoy, both *in this world*, and *in the world to come*.

In this world you have every *temporal* blessing secured to you, to the utmost extent of your necessities, by the express promise of your heavenly Father. The children of men may say, of their respective possessions, this estate, or that kingdom, is mine: but of the children of God it may be said, "All things are yours." As far as it can conduce to your real happiness, the whole world is yours, yea, all things, whether present or future[k]. As for *spiritual* blessings, there is nothing which the Lord Jesus Christ himself enjoyed when on earth, that is not made over to you also. You may have constant access to your Father's presence; you may ask of him whatever you will; you shall have his continual guidance in difficulties, support in trials, and consolation in troubles: every thing shall be ordered and over-ruled for your good; and you shall be carried on through all your destined labours, till you can say, "It is finished." Of none but God's children can this be said; but of them it may be said without one single exception.

You may carry your views yet farther, even to *the world to come;* and there also shall your happiness extend. There is reserved for all the Lord's children "an inheritance, which is incorruptible and undefiled, and never-fading." If we are children, then are we heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. Think then of all that God the Father has in heaven to bestow; think of all that the Lord Jesus Christ, as your living Head, now enjoys there; and you will then have some faint idea of the inheritance reserved for you. Amongst men, if an eldest son should inherit all his father's property, the rest of the family would be unprovided for: but in heaven it is not so: every one has all that he could have, though there should be none but himself to possess the inheritance. Even here every man has all the light of the sun, notwithstanding millions of his fellow-creatures enjoy it together with him: and in like manner in heaven, all the glory and felicity of it is the portion of every saint around the throne of God.

[k] 1 Cor. iii. 21—23.

Are you then really under the leadings of the Holy Spirit? Rejoice and adore your God, who has called you into so near a relation to him, and invested you with honours higher than even the highest archangel is privileged to possess.]

From this subject we may further LEARN,

1. The importance of discovering by what spirit we are led—

[Many are not led by the Spirit of God, but by the spirit of the world; which, as St. Paul tells us[l], and as experience too fatally proves, is contrary to the Spirit of God in all its actings. What spirit, I would ask, is that which leads the young into all manner of pleasure and gaiety; and causes those of middle age to be so immersed in cares, as scarcely to leave them a single hour to serve their God? What spirit is that which even in advanced life engages the thoughts and affections still on the side of the world, when time has worn away almost all capacity to enjoy it? Yet this is the spirit by which the generality are actuated to their dying hour.

But even where religion appears to occupy the mind, many, alas! are led only by their own spirit. The very manner in which they speak and act shews, that pride and conceit and vanity are the predominant dispositions of their hearts. They have a zeal perhaps for some favourite tenets, or for their own particular party; but they want the humility, the meekness, and the love which are the distinguishing features of all who are born of God.

It is not easy for persons to discern what spirit they themselves are of, even when all around them see how awfully they are deluded. But it concerns us all to examine carefully our own hearts and ways, that we may not deceive our own souls: for whatever we may imagine, they only are children of God, who bear the image of their Father: and they who fulfil the will of Satan, are, as God himself testifies, the children of the wicked one[m]. Surely we should guard against so fatal a delusion as this, lest, when we enter into the eternal world, expecting to behold the face of our God in peace, we meet only an accusing God, and an avenging Judge.]

2. The importance of honouring him whose motions we profess to follow—

[In professing to be led by the Spirit of God, you claim, of course, the honour of being the children of God. And if you claim this honour, O think what manner of conversation yours should be; how holy, how spiritual, how heavenly! It should not be thought sufficient to maintain what may be called

[l] 1 Cor. ii. 12. [m] John viii. 44. and 1 John iii. 10.

a blameless conduct; you should shine as lights in the midst of a dark world[n], and "walk worthy of him who hath called you to his kingdom and glory." Would you see the particulars wherein such conduct consists? read it in that direction which St. Paul gives to the Colossian Church; "Put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness[o]." Here is living Christianity: this is to walk as Christ walked: and by this shall all men know that ye are the disciples of Christ, "the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty."]

[n] Phil. ii. 15, 16. [o] Col. iii. 12—14.

MDCCCLXX.

THE SPIRIT OF BONDAGE AND OF ADOPTION.

Rom. viii. 15. *Ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*

OUR blessed Lord in his last discourse with his Disciples, promised to send down from heaven the Holy Spirit, who should "convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment:" and accordingly, on the day of Pentecost he did send down the Holy Spirit, who instantly wrought in the most powerful manner on the minds of thousands, filling them with the deepest convictions, and with the richest consolations. From that time the Holy Spirit has continued so to work on the minds of men, in some as a Spirit of bondage, and in others as a Spirit of adoption. The *nature* of the Holy Spirit's operations is the same in both cases; their use and tendency being to bring men to God: the difference which is found in the *effects*, is occasioned by the state of the persons on whom the Spirit works: in those whose minds are yet blinded by Satan, and enslaved by sin, he produces only bondage and fear: but those who are deeply penitent, and unfeignedly desirous of fulfilling the word of God, he introduces into a state of light and liberty and joy.

Corresponding with these different states of men was the difference between the Jewish and the Christian dispensations; the one of which was intended to introduce the other: and it was good, *as far as it answered that end:* but, as an ultimate state to rest in, it was bad: it consisted only of "weak and beggarly elements," and imposed an insupportable yoke, from which it is our happy privilege to be released. It is in reference to that dispensation chiefly that the Apostle uses the word "*again;*" because the Jewish converts at Rome had, previous to their embracing of Christianity, groaned under that yoke: but the others also, in their heathen state, had experienced a bondage not very dissimilar; and therefore the same expression may not improperly be applied to them also.

That we may have a distinct view of the whole of the Spirit's operations, we shall consider them,

I. In reference to the dispensation under which we live—

The Christian dispensation, as contrasted with the Jewish, is called "The ministration of the Spirit[a]," because under that dispensation the Spirit is poured forth far more abundantly than before.

The Jewish economy tended only to bondage—

[*The* terrific *manner in which the law was given*, generated nothing but fear in all who heard it: even Moses himself said on the occasion, "I exceedingly fear and quake." And the strict prohibition to all the people not so much as to touch the border of the mount, clearly shewed to them that it was not a dispensation whereby they were ever to obtain a near access to God.

The two *tables of the law*, which were then given to Moses, were so holy, that though *in the letter* they might be observed, *in the spirit* they could not be kept by any child of man: and yet they were enforced with the most awful sanctions, the smallest violation of any one command subjecting the offender to death, even eternal death. What but fear could result from such a dispensation as this?

The very *sacrifices* prescribed for the relief of those consciences which were oppressed with guilt, tended, in fact, to

[a] 2 Cor. iii. 8.

confirm, rather than relieve, the bondage of their minds. For how could they imagine that "the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin?" Hence "the offerers were never made perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;" and the annual repetition of the same sacrifices confirmed their apprehensions, that their sins, so imperfectly atoned for, were not effectually removed. The sacrifices were to them only "a remembrance of sins from year to year[b]." Moreover, the people in their own persons could not approach unto their God: they must deliver their offerings to the priests and Levites: nay, not even the priests could enter within the vail, nor even the high-priest himself, except on one day in the year, and then only in the precise manner that was prescribed to him. In all this, the Holy Ghost, who even under that dispensation was not altogether withheld from men, "signified to the Jewish nation that the way into the holy of holies was not yet manifest[c]."

Even *the promises* that were given for their encouragement were, for the most part, only such as were calculated to work upon an earthly mind, and in no respect to bring them to a state of peace and joy. Hence, except those few favoured saints who had an insight into the Gospel, and were enabled to look through the shadows of the law to Christ as the substance of them, all were in bondage, serving God from fear, rather than from love; and rendering to him rather the reluctant services of the body, than the willing devotion of the soul.]

The Christian dispensation, on the contrary, tends to produce in us a happy childlike disposition—

[*The new covenant*, which it holds forth to us, offers life and salvation on far different terms than were prescribed by the old covenant. The old covenant said, "Do this and live:" the new covenant says, "Believe and be saved[d]." The Gospel reveals unto us *a sacrifice*, that is, "a propitiation for the sins of the whole world;" and offers us *a Saviour*, who is "able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." Under this dispensation every one is privileged to enjoy *the most intimate access to God*, to "come with boldness into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, to draw near to God with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having his heart altogether sprinkled and purged from an evil conscience[e]." Further, these rich blessings are revealed to us as the fruits of *God's everlasting love*, no less than as the purchase of the Redeemer's blood; and to the blessings of time are added all the glory and felicity of heaven, as the assured portion of all God's chosen people.

But, besides this clearer revelation of God's grace and

[b] Heb. x. 1—4. [c] Heb. ix. 6—8.
[d] Rom. x. 5—9. [e] Heb. x. 19, 22

mercy, there is a manifestation of it made to the souls of the faithful by the Spirit of God, who "sheds abroad in their hearts the love of God" the Father, and "takes of the things that are Christ's to shew unto them," and by his own sanctifying operations "delivers them from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."]

With this contrasted view of the two dispensations agree the express declarations of God himself—

[The nature of the two dispensations is thus distinctly marked by a very striking allegory; in which *the Spirit generated* in those who were *under them* is contrasted by that of a servant and a child[f]: moreover, *the transition from the one to the other* is illustrated by the very same images as have been already noticed[g]: and *the final issue of our adherence to the one or to the other* is declared to be precisely such as might be expected;—to the servant, banishment; and to the son, an everlasting inheritance[h].]

But, to enter fully into the subject, we must consider it,

II. In reference to the experience of individual believers—

The Holy Spirit strives in a greater or less degree with all:

In the unconverted, he works as "a spirit of bondage"—

[He is the true Author of every good desire. The least disposition towards what is good is as much his work as the most spiritual exercises of God's dearest children. His operation therefore must be traced as well in the hearts of the unconverted, as of the converted. In the commencement, he operates in a way of *legal hopes:* in the progress, he impels to *slavish fears:* and, with those who are not the subjects of saving grace, he terminates his operations by instigating to *self-righteous endeavours.* A person first beginning to think about his soul, (for which thought he is wholly indebted to the Spirit of God,) is desirous of putting the most favourable construction on all his former ways, and of dissipating all apprehensions about his eternal state. Hence he persuades himself, that he has never committed any great sins; or, if he has, that they were committed under such circumstances as greatly to palliate their guilt: that, at all events, God is too merciful ever to visit his offences with such a terrible punishment as the Scriptures speak of: and that his good deeds, which he either has performed, or hopes to perform, will counter-

[f] Gal. iv. 1—6. Heb. xii. 18—24. [h] Gal. iv. 24, 25, 30.

balance all the evil he has done. By degrees his mind becomes more enlightened, and he sees that his sins have been neither so few, nor so venial, as he had imagined. And now his *legal hopes* vanish, and are succeeded by *slavish fears*. The declarations of God respecting the final condemnation of the wicked are credited by him; and his claims of innocence or good desert are seen to be destitute of any solid foundation. Now the thoughts of death and judgment are terrible to him; and, as St. Paul says, He, "through fear of death, is all his lifetime subject to bondage." To such an extent do "these terrors of the Lord" operate on many, that they hate their very existence, and would gladly surrender it up, if they could but perish like the beasts, and never be called to any future account. These apprehensions lead, as may be expected, to *self-righteous endeavours*. The person who is under their influence, sets himself to read, and pray, and attend the ordinances: he dispenses alms to the poor; he renounces many practices which he once justified, and performs many duties which he once neglected; hoping, if possible, to make up for all the time that he has lost, and to conciliate the favour of his offended God. As his light increases, and the insufficiency of human merit is discovered by him, he looks to the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, to atone for his faults, and to supply his defects. Perhaps in time the folly of depending on human righteousness is seen by him; and he is willing to seek for salvation through Christ, provided he may but recommend himself to Christ by some obedience of his own, and have in himself the warrant for embracing the Saviour, and for expecting his salvation. Thus he founds his hopes, if not entirely, yet in some measure, on his own good works; and though doing well, as far as respects the ardour of his exertions, he fatally errs in making *self* the ground of his dependence, and perishes for want of a better righteousness than his own. This was the progress of the Spirit's work in the unconverted Jews[i]; and such it is also in thousands at the present day.]

In those who are converted, he works as a Spirit of adoption—

[To these he imparts sublimer gifts, enabling them to look up with confidence to God, crying, "Abba, Father." He gives them an *assured testimony of their acceptance* with God as a reconciled God and Father; setting, as it were, upon their hearts the Father's seal[k], and witnessing with their spirits that they are the children of God[l]. Thus, drawing them by his gracious influences, he brings them into *a state of holy "fellowship* with the Father and the Son," causing them to walk

[i] Rom. ix. 31, 32. [k] 2 Cor. i. 21, 22. [l] ver. 16.

with God as dear children, and to live habitually as in his presence; they "dwelling in God, and God in them;" yea, being "one with God, and God with them." As brought into the family of God, they now, through the power of that same blessed Spirit, live in *a humble dependence* upon God for all that they stand in need of for body and for soul, for time and for eternity. "All their care is cast on Him who careth for them;" and the life which they live in the flesh they live by the faith of the Son of God, "receiving every thing out of his fulness," in the time and measure that Infinite Wisdom seeth best for them. Nor are these heavenly gifts uninfluential on their conduct. They now walk in the *habit of grateful obedience* to God, desiring and striving to be "perfect, even as their Father which is in heaven is perfect." They serve their God no longer from fear, as slaves, but from love; as obedient children, whose ambition is to do their Father's will on earth, as it is done in heaven. Elevated thus, and sanctified by the Spirit's influence, they are filled with *a joyful expectation* of dwelling speedily, and to all eternity, in the immediate presence of that Saviour, "whom unseen they loved, and in whom even here they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory." They "look for, and haste unto, the coming of that blessed day," when they shall behold him face to face: the time seems long till they shall enjoy that bliss; and, with a holy impatience, they are ready to cry, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." They know that, as children, they are heirs: they have already, in the consolations of the Spirit, had "an earnest of their inheritance;" and they long for the full possession of it, "desiring to depart, that they may be with Christ." Thus does the Spirit work, though certainly in different degrees, on all the children of God, inspiring *them* with *filial joys*, as he fills the *unregenerate* with *slavish fears*.]

In conclusion, we would entreat all of you to INQUIRE,

What spirit you have received?

1. Have you received the Spirit of God *at all?*

[Many, alas! have scarcely so much as "heard whether there be any Holy Ghost:" or, if they have, they regard all idea of his agency upon the soul as visionary and delusive. But let such persons know, that they are altogether dead in trespasses and sins. If the Spirit of God have not so far wrought upon our minds as to convince us of our lost estate, we have not as yet taken one single step towards heaven. The declaration of St. Paul in the preceding context is, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."]

2. Have you received the Spirit as a spirit of bondage?

[*Despise it not:* the fears and terrors with which he has filled your minds, may be introductory to your final liberty, and your complete salvation. It is thus that the Spirit usually, if not invariably, works in those who are "translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son." He first wounds, and then heals, the soul: he "convinces us first of sin," and then "of righteousness and of judgment:" he causes us to feel ourselves lost, and makes use of that feeling to lead us to Him who came into the world to seek and save us. "Despise not then the day of small things:" for "then shall you know if you follow on to know the Lord."

On the other hand, we must say, *Do not rest in it.* The spirit of bondage will generate fear; but it will not produce either love or holiness, both of which are necessary to your everlasting salvation. If we have no better principle than slavish fear to make us obedient to our God, what are we better than the heathen? The Christian must regard God, not merely as a Judge, but as a Father. He must obey, not through fear of the lash, but from a real love to his name, and an unfeigned delight in his holy will. The truth, if it enter into our hearts, will make us free: and it will "deliver us from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God."]

3. Have you received the Spirit *as a Spirit of adoption?*

[Then *be thankful for it*, and adore your God for the exceeding riches of his grace towards you. But *take care that you do not deceive your own souls respecting it.* It is possible to mistake in this matter, and to refer to God's agency the delusions of Satan and of your own hearts. Many indulge a very unhallowed confidence in God. But, though it is our privilege to put away *slavish* fear, it is our duty to cherish to the uttermost a *filial* fear of offending God. We must "walk in the fear of the Lord all the day long." If we are on our guard in this particular, then our confidence cannot be too strong; since there is nothing which a loving father can bestow on his obedient child, which our God will not confer on us. Know then your privilege, and rejoice in it; and with all the confidence which the repetition of the word implies, go into the presence of your God from time to time, crying, "Abba, Father." But *take care that you do not lose it.* Take care that you "grieve not the Holy Spirit of promise, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption[m]." Watch over your every action, word, and thought; endeavouring to walk

[m] Eph. iv. 30.

"as obedient children," yea, "as dear children," worthy of the relation in which you stand to God; "being holy, as He who hath called you is holy[n]."]

[n] 1 Pet. i. 14, 15.

MDCCCLXXI.

THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.

Rom. viii. 16. *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.*

THERE is a tribunal before which we must all appear at the last day: but we need not wait till that time to ascertain our true character. Every man has a tribunal erected in his own bosom. The conscience, according to the light it has received, accuses or excuses, those who will listen to its voice. This is common to heathens as well as Christians[a]. But God's people are favoured with the additional testimony of the Holy Spirit. Of this the Apostle speaks in the passage before us.

We shall endeavour to shew,

I. What is the witness here spoken of—

Witnesses imply a doubt of the thing which is to be confirmed. The thing to be ascertained here is, "That we are the children of God." Respecting this, many are in suspense all their days; but God has provided means for the removal of these doubts.

He has been pleased to give us the witness of his Spirit.

1. Through the medium of rational deduction—

[We may judge of our state by comparing it with the declarations of Scripture: God has given many marks and characters of his own people[b]; we may examine by these how far our practice corresponds with our duty, and know from the testimony of an enlightened conscience our real state. This is a scriptural way of judging: St. Paul used it[c]; and exhorts us

[a] Rom. ii. 15. [b] e. g. 1 John iii. 10.

[c] He knew that God required real integrity of heart, Ps. li. 6. He therefore laboured to attain it, Acts xxiv. 16. He had the testimony

to use it[d]. St. Peter represents the attainment of this as a principal part of our baptismal engagement[e]; St. John also assures us, that this is the way in which God would have us to know our state[f].]

2. In a way of immediate impression—

[The Spirit, as a "Spirit of adoption," testifies to the believer's soul, that he belongs to God. Not that this testimony is given without *any* reference to the Scripture; yet it is imparted in a more instantaneous manner, and in a far higher degree, at some times than at others. God by his Spirit sometimes "sheds abroad his love in the heart" in such a measure, and shines so clearly on the work he has already wrought there, as to convey immediately a full persuasion and assurance of an interest in his favour. As by "the sealing of the Spirit" he stamps his own image on his children for the conviction of others, so by "the witness of the Spirit" he testifies of their adoption for the more immediate comfort of their own souls. These manifestations are vouchsafed, for the most part, to prepare the soul for trials, to support it under them, or to comfort it after them: but they cannot be explained for the satisfaction of others[g]; yet may they be sufficiently proved from Scripture to be the privilege and portion of true believers[h].]

To guard the doctrine against every species of delusion, we shall shew,

II. How to distinguish it from all false and enthusiastic pretensions—

Many, it must be confessed, have pretended to this witness on false grounds[i], and Satan is ready enough

of his conscience that he had attained it, Heb. xiii. 18. And this testimony was to him a ground of joy before God, 2 Cor. i. 12.

[d] 2 Cor. xiii. 5. [e] 1 Pet. iii. 21. [f] 1 John iii. 20, 21.

[g] We cannot convey to any man a just idea of sensations which he has never felt; they must be experienced in order to be understood. The work of the Spirit in regeneration is not fully understood even by those who are the subjects of it, notwithstanding its effects are as visible as those of the wind, John iii. 8. We cannot expect, therefore, that his less visible operations should be more intelligible to those who have never experienced them at all. See Rev. ii. 17.

[h] See Rom. viii. 15; 2 Cor. i. 21, 22; and Eph. iv. 30; which clearly shew, that the Holy Spirit does operate on the souls of God's people, and perform towards them the office both of a sanctifier and a comforter.

[i] Some have fancied that the Spirit witnessed their adoption because they have had a singular dream, or a portion of scripture has been suddenly and strongly impressed upon their minds, or they have enjoyed peculiar comfort in their souls.

to help forward such delusions. But the witness of the Spirit may be distinguished from all enthusiastic pretensions to it, if we consider attentively,

1. What precedes it—

[Conviction of our lost estate, faith in the Redeemer, and devotedness to God as our rightful Sovereign, must precede it. If we have not these things, we cannot be God's children; and we may be sure the Spirit will never attest a falsehood.]

2. What accompanies it—

[Humility of mind, a jealous fear of ourselves, and a love to the weakest of God's people, attend these divine communications; whereas pride and conceit, with a presumptuous confidence, and a contempt of others, are ever found in deluded enthusiasts.]

3. What follows it—

[Manifestations of God to the soul always produce zeal in his service; victory over sin; and a longing for the enjoyment of him in heaven; but supineness, subjection to evil tempers, and a forgetfulness of the eternal world, generally characterize the self-deceiving professor. Let every one therefore examine his pretensions by these marks — — —]

ADDRESS—

1. Those who know nothing of this testimony of the Spirit—

[You probably do not understand the regenerating influences of the Spirit; and yet you see them manifested in the lives of many around you. Do not then condemn the witness of the Spirit merely because you cannot comprehend it: rather pray to God that you yourselves may be his children, and that the Spirit may testify to you of your adoption.]

2. Those who profess to have received it—

[A delusion in this is above all things to be guarded against: if your dispositions be habitually bad, your pretensions are all a delusion: where the witness of the Spirit is, there will the fruits also of the Spirit be.]

3. Those who long to receive it—

[To have the full witness of the Spirit is desirable, but not necessary: it is a great mercy if we enjoy his lower attestations in a good conscience. Let us labour to serve God, and leave to him the time, manner, and degree, in which he shall reveal himself to us.]

4. Those who now enjoy this witness—

[The manifestations of God to the soul are a very heaven upon earth; let them therefore be duly esteemed and diligently improved; but beware lest you "grieve the Spirit by whom you are sealed:" be looking forward with increasing earnestness to your inheritance; and while you enjoy the inward witness that you are the children of God, let the world have an outward evidence of it in your lives[k].]

[k] In confirmation of this view of a very difficult subject, the reader is referred to an elaborate and judicious discussion of it in Edwards on the Affections, page 168—185; at the close of which that most penetrating author gives a summary of the whole in these words: 'When the Apostle Paul speaks of the Spirit of God bearing witness with our spirit, *he is not to be understood of two spirits, that are two separate, collateral, independent witnesses; but it is by one, that we receive the witness of the other:* the Spirit of God gives the evidence, by infusing and shedding abroad the love of God, the spirit of a child, in the heart; and our spirit, or our conscience, receives and declares this evidence of our rejoicing.'

To obviate any objection that may seem to arise from the term *συμμαρτυρεῖ*, see how the same word is used, Rom. ix. 1.

MDCCCLXXII.

THE PRIVILEGES OF GOD'S CHILDREN.

Rom. viii. 17. *If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

THERE are many high-sounding titles among men, which are no otherwise profitable to the possessors of them, than as they please their fancy, and gratify their pride. But the honourable appellations given to the true Christian, are connected with real and substantial benefits, which every one who is counted worthy of them shall infallibly enjoy. Believers are called in Scripture, "Children of God." Now this name is not a mere Hebraism, or figure of speech peculiar to Scripture: for though it is true that the Scriptures speak of children of promise, children of disobedience, children of the curse, importing only that the persons so called are of such or such a character; yet the term "Children of God" is of a more determinate meaning: it imports a

relation to God as a Father; and includes all that is comprehended in that relation. Hence the Apostle, having spoken of believers under this term, immediately draws this inference from it, "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."

In considering these words, we shall set before you,

I. The privileges of believers—

It is here taken for granted, that believers are children of God: we therefore pass over that, and notice only the privileges attached to that relation. And here we find them,

1. Briefly stated—

[We know what is usually understood by the term "heir." An heir is one who has a title to an estate, not as having earned or merited it, but simply by right of primogeniture. He comes to the full possession of it as soon as he is of age; and in the mean time he is supported out of it agreeably to the rank of life he is hereafter to sustain.

Now from hence we may see what is implied in the term, when applied to the children of God. They have a claim to heaven itself as their inheritance[a]. But their right does not at all arise from any thing they have done to deserve or purchase it: it is founded solely on their having been born of God through the operations of the Holy Spirit upon their souls[b]. They come to the full possession of it at the time appointed of the Father: but, while they continue minors, they are educated, and maintained, in a manner suited to their high and heavenly birth: they have the Holy Ghost himself for their teacher[c]; they have manna from heaven, even "angels' food," for their support[d]; they have the garments of salvation for their clothing[e]; and angels for their attendants to minister unto them[f].

In some respects indeed the parallel does not hold: for, amongst men, the eldest only is the heir, and the younger have smaller portions allotted to them: but, of the children of God, every one has an equal right to the whole inheritance. Besides, the heirs of men may die, or be defrauded of their inheritance: but the children of God have their inheritance reserved for them; and they are kept for it[g]. Moreover, the heirs of men retain their possessions but a little time, and lose them entirely at death: but the children of God come to the full enjoyment of their inheritance, when they die; and then possess it for ever and ever.]

[a] 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. [b] John i. 13. [c] 1 John ii. 27.
[d] John vi. 53—55. Ps. lxxviii. 25. [e] Isai. lxi. 10.
[f] Heb. i. 14. [g] 1 Pet. i. 4, 5.

2. Strongly amplified—

[When the Apostle says, "heirs; heirs of God," he does not intend merely to repeat the idea, but to enlarge and amplify it by a very important addition. The children of men, though denominated heirs of such or such a person, can only inherit the substance belonging to that person: but the children of God inherit all that God *has*, and, if we may so speak, all that he *is*. To them belong "*all things*," whether present or future, whether temporal or eternal[h]. To them belong also all the perfections of the Deity, so far at least as they need to have them exercised for their good in this world, and for their happiness in the next: they can say with David, "The Lord himself is the portion of mine inheritance[i]."

Further light is thrown upon this subject by the additional expression, "joint-heirs with Christ." Christ is the Lord and "Heir of all things[k]." But "he is not ashamed to call us brethren[l]." By virtue of this relation to him, we are partakers of all that he inherits. Has "his Father appointed unto him a kingdom? Such is appointed to us" also[m]. Has his Father called him to a throne? We also are seated on it together with him[n]. Does he, agreeably to his Father's will, possess a glory and felicity infinitely surpassing our highest conceptions? The same also is given to us for our everlasting portion[o].

But, whatever be the means of bringing us to the enjoyment of this portion, our right and title to it arises wholly from our relation to God the Father as his children; "*If children, then heirs;*" "if a son, *then* an heir of God through Christ[p]."]

We must not however forget,

II. The condition on which they are bestowed—

Though we are not required to do any thing in order to earn these privileges, or to render an equivalent for them when bestowed upon us, yet are conditions imposed upon us; and we must submit to those conditions, if ever we would participate the blessedness of God's children.

For the sake of perspicuity, we will shew,

1. What the condition is—

[Christ, our elder Brother, was a sufferer, "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief[q]." In this respect all the

[h] 1 Cor. iii. 21—23. [i] Ps. xvi. 5. [k] Heb. i. 2.
[l] Heb. ii. 11. [m] Luke xxii. 29. [n] Rev. iii. 21.
[o] John xvii. 22. [p] Gal. iv. 7. [q] Isai. liii. 3.

family must resemble him: every one of them must learn obedience in the same way[r], and be perfected by the same means[s]. It is appointed to all the disciples of Jesus to "take up their cross, and follow him." They must expect the same treatment from an ungodly world as he experienced: they must be hated, reviled, persecuted: "the disciple cannot be above his Lord; it is sufficient for him to be as his Lord:" "if they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, much more will they those of his household."

Now it is not easy for flesh and blood to endure these things: we are ever ready, through pride and anger, to resent such treatment; or, through shame and cowardice, to shun it. But the condition is plain and absolute, *No cross, no crown:* "We must suffer with him, if ever we would be glorified together."]

2. The equity of it—

[Our sufferings are intended *as a test of our love to Christ.* There was no necessity for our blessed Lord to submit to sufferings, unless he chose to undertake our cause, and put himself in the place of sinners: yet, purely for our sakes, he endured even death itself, yea, the painful and accursed death of the cross. If our trials then were a thousand times more severe than they are, would it not become us cheerfully to sustain them in proof of our regard for him? If he voluntarily bore so much for our good, it is surely reasonable that we should, when called to it, endure somewhat for his glory.

But our sufferings are also intended *to secure to us, and augment, the inheritance itself.* Nothing tends more to wean us from the world, than the opposition we meet from worldly men. Our "tribulation also worketh patience;" yea, it both exercises and confirms our every grace[t]. Strange as it may appear, the enduring of trials for Christ's sake tends greatly to the advancement even of our present happiness, inasmuch as it "turns to us for a testimony[u]," and puts honour upon us[x], and is, for the most part, attended with the richest consolations of the Spirit[y]. And, beyond all doubt, it will hereafter be recompensed "with a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory[z]."

Can we then complain of a condition, which at once conduces to God's glory, and to our happiness? We should rather rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer in so good a cause[a]; and be contented to obtain the inheritance in the way which our heavenly Father has ordained[b]."]

[r] Heb. v. 8. [s] Heb. ii. 10. [t] Rom. v. 3, 4.
[u] Luke xxi. 13. [x] Phil. xxi. 29. 1 Pet. iv. 13, 14.
[y] 2 Cor. i. 5. [z] 2 Cor. iv. 17. [a] Acts v. 41.
[b] 2 Tim. iii. 12. Acts xiv. 22.

ADDRESS—

1. Those who are afraid of the cross—

[Hope not ever to alter the condition which God has imposed: *that* is absolutely irreversible[c]." Consider the time when our Lord imposed the condition; and blush for your timidity[d]. Consider how little it is in the power of man to do against you, and what a sad alternative you prefer[e]; and let your cowardice humble you in the dust. Think what a worm it is that you are afraid of, and what an omnipotent Being you displease[f]: and lastly, consider whether the inheritance will not abundantly repay all that you can endure in the way to it. Let such reflections as these occupy your minds. Count the cost at once, and learn to "sell all for this invaluable pearl[g]."]

2. The suffering children of God—

[Think it not strange that ye meet with fiery trials[h]: you have often been forewarned respecting it[i]: and they are all working for your good[k]. If you were to suffer for evil-doing, there would be reason for shame: but to suffer for well-doing is honourable, and acceptable with God[l]. While the heir feels the restraints of his minority, he comforts himself with the prospect that he shall ere long be of age, and launch into the complete fruition of all his wishes. Your trials are, as it were, a needful discipline, to which you must submit for a little time: but soon they will for ever end, and all the felicity of heaven be yours. "Be patient therefore till the coming of you Lord[m];" consoling yourselves with that delightful promise, "He that overcometh, shall inherit all things[n]."]

[c] 2 Tim. ii. 12, 13. [d] Matt. xvi. 21, 24. "*Then.*"
[e] Luke xii. 4, 5. Matt. xvi. 25. [f] Isai. li. 7, 8, 12, 13.
[g] Matt. xiii. 44—46. [h] 1 Pet. iv. 12. [i] 1 Thess. iii. 4.
[k] 1 Pet. i. 7. [l] 1 Pet. ii. 19, 20. & iv. 15, 16.
[m] Jam. v. 7, 10, 11. [n] Rev. xxi. 7.

MDCCCLXXIII.

PRESENT TROUBLES AND FUTURE GLORY.

Rom. viii. 18. *I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

AN expectation of ultimate advantage is that, which gives activity to men in every situation of life. But, while it operates with full force in things relating to this world, its influence is scarcely felt by the

generality of mankind in relation to things spiritual and eternal. Hence they are easily drawn aside from the path of duty by the allurements of time and sense, or driven from it by the terrors of persecution: whereas, if they would duly estimate the pleasures or pains of this present life, and weigh them in a balance against the glory and felicity of the world to come, they would be stimulated to patience and diligence in well-doing, since they could not but see with the Apostle, that the one were not worthy to be named in comparison of the other.

That we may judge of the Apostle's estimate, I will endeavour to set before you *the trials of the saint in this life*, and *the glory that awaits him in the life to come*.

I. Distinctly—

The trials of a saint in this life are great—

["Man is born to trouble," and every man must expect his share of it in this world: but the saints have a greater portion of it than others.

In common with others, they are called to endure pain of body, distress of mind, loss of friends, embarrassment of circumstances, and every other evil incident to this mortal state.

But besides all this, they have many trials *peculiar to themselves*. *From within*, they are often bowed down under a sense of guilt, or under their indwelling corruptions: they are sometimes harassed with temptations, which, as fiery darts, wound and inflame their inmost souls: and sometimes they are overwhelmed with the hidings of their Father's face, and ready to sink in utter despair. How grievous these sensations are, no words can adequately express. They are also not a little tried *from without*. The contempt, the hatred, the persecutions they endure, are often grievous to be borne; and would shake their fidelity, if they were not upheld and strengthened by their God.

Let this accumulated load be weighed as in a balance, and it will be found exceeding heavy, insomuch that, "if in this life only they had hope," the saints would be of all men in the most pitiable condition.]

But the glory that awaits him is also great—

[There is a glory that shall be revealed *to* us, and a glory that shall be revealed *in* us: both of these are included in the

words before us[a]; and, taken together, they comprise all the glory and felicity of heaven.

The very place to which we shall be admitted, is described by all the powers of language, in order to convey to us some faint idea of its beauty[b]. There we shall behold all the angelic hosts with the spirits of just men made perfect (how bright and blessed an assembly must that be!) yea, we shall see the Lamb of God, that very Jesus who was crucified for us, seated on his throne; and we shall behold the Father also face to face: we shall see him as he is, in all the brightness of his glory.

Together with this, we ourselves shall be fully changed into the image of our God: we shall resemble him both in body and soul, as far as finite creatures can resemble the infinite Jehovah. We shall also participate the blessedness of the Deity: and every vessel, according to its capacity, shall be filled with joy.

But it is in vain to estimate what is so infinitely above our comprehension; for "we know not yet what we shall be." Even our present privileges surpass all that the carnal eye, or ear, or heart, has ever seen, or heard, or conceived[c]; much more therefore must the happiness of heaven infinitely exceed all that language can express, or imagination conceive.]

Such being the two states of suffering and of glory as viewed distinctly, let us now bring them under our review,

II. In a way of comparison—

[Sufferings, of whatever kind, are painful to flesh and blood; but when estimated according to the word of God, they are *light, mixed, and momentary*. How light are they in comparison of what thay might be———or of what we deserve———or of what Jesus endured for us———or of what myriads of our fellow-creatures are now enduring in hell!———Besides, amidst them all, we have innumerable mercies for which to be thankful———and, if they were continued throughout our whole lives, they would be short as the twinkling of an eye, in comparison of the state to which we are hastening———

But the glory that awaits us is *exceeding great*, even "a weight" as great as the soul with its most enlarged powers is able to support———It is also *unmixed* with any alloy of sin, or sorrow———and its duration will be *eternal*, even co-existent with the soul itself———

What comparison then is there between them? So infinitely

[a] εἰς ἡμᾶς. [b] Rev xxi. 10—23. [c] 2 Cor. ii. 9

does the glory exceed all the sufferings that we can endure in this life, that if we add hyperbole to hyperbole, and strain all the powers of language and of thought, to express the difference[d], we never can do justice to the subject, or declare a thousandth part of that which really exists. The Apostle's estimate was formed as the result of a minute and accurate *computation*[e]; and therefore the accuracy of it is past a doubt. In fact, the Apostle does not institute *a comparison* between them (for they will not admit of any comparison); but he says that the sufferings are "not worthy[f]" (not worthy *of any consideration*, no, *not of a thought*), when the glory that shall follow them is kept in view.]

IMPROVEMENT—

We may learn from hence,

1. How to judge of God's dispensations—

[To those who look no farther than to the present life, "the ways of God appear unequal:" since the godly are oppressed, and the wicked triumph. But let eternity be taken into the account, and all the seeming inequalities will vanish: the godly will be recompensed for their sufferings; and the wicked will receive the due reward of their impieties. The Judge of all the earth will not only do right, but will manifest the equity of all his dispensations.]

2. How to comfort the afflicted mind—

[When persons are complaining that their trials are exceeding heavy, and that they are ready to faint because of them, we should lead them to view their sufferings *in a way of comparison*, or *in a way of contrast*. We should compare the good they lose or the evil they sustain, with the good and evil that are beyond the grave: or we should contrast the good to be enjoyed in a life of sin, with the evil which sin will hereafter bring upon us; or the evil to be sustained in this life, with the good with which it shall hereafter be compensated. In either of these methods[g] we may, with God's help, put an end to their murmuring; and make them willing to bear their present afflictions in expectation of the benefit that will result from them.]

3. How to regulate our own conduct—

[d] See 2 Cor. iv. 17. in the Greek. [e] λογίζομαι. [f] ἄξια.

[g] The Scriptures point out these distinctly: they *compare* present with future good, Heb. xi. 16. and present evil with future, Luke xii. 5. So also they *contrast* present good with future evil, Eccl. xi. 9. and present evil with future good, Heb. x. 34. And the effect of both these methods in composing the mind is intimated in 2 Cor. iv. 18.

[Are we under trials? we should view our sufferings as ordered by God himself in number, weight, and duration, and consider them as means appointed by him for the perfecting of his work within us. Then, whatever our trials be, we shall not give way to an undue depression of mind; but shall commit ourselves to God in silent resignation, and wait for our recompence in the eternal world.]

MDCCCLXXIV.

THE STATE OF GOD'S CHILDREN.

Rom. viii. 23. *And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*

MUCH is spoken in Scripture respecting the happiness of the saints. And doubtless they are on many accounts the most blessed people upon earth. But they also experience in a great degree the sorrows that pervade the universe. It is not in this, but in the future world, that they are to attain perfect uninterrupted felicity.

The Apostle is here encouraging the afflicted Christians to endure their trials patiently, in expectation of a rich eternal recompence. He tells them that the whole creation were supported under their present sufferings by a hope of some happier state: and that he himself, notwithstanding the privileges he enjoyed, participated with them in the common lot.

From his words we are led to consider,

I. The state of the creation at large—

This is fully developed in the four verses preceding our text. There are however considerable difficulties in those verses; but chiefly arising from the inaccuracy of the translation. Read them thus, and the main difficulties will be overcome: "The earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God: (for the *creation* was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same;) in hope that the *creation* itself also shall be delivered from the bondage

of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole *creation* groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." Thus, by translating the word κτίσις, *creation*, and the word ὅτι, *that*, and by inclosing a part in a parenthesis, the whole will be made clear, and to a certain degree easy.

[The whole creation was reduced to a very deplorable condition by the fall of man. The *material* world underwent a most awful change: cursed was the ground for man's sake: the earth rendered barren without continual and laborious culture, or fruitful only in briers and thorns, which, if left unrestrained, would speedly overrun it: and the atmosphere rendered the fatal source of storms, and tempests, and pestilential vapours for the destruction of man[a]. The *animal* world, first subjected to man's controul, and innoxious in all their habits, had such a change wrought within them, that they all of various orders prey one upon another, and are more or less arrayed in hostility to man. The *rational* world partook more largely still of this fatal change: for man universally, and without exception, was despoiled of the Divine image, and corrupted in all his faculties, whether of mind or body, and subjected to innumerable diseases, and miseries, and death.]

But things shall not always continue thus—

[There is a time coming, when God will manifest himself in a more especial manner to his own people; and it is therefore called, "The manifestation of the sons of God:" and then shall the sentence denounced against *the whole creation* be reversed, in order that every creature, *according to its capacity*, may partake of that universal blessedness. The *material* world will become again what it was at first, beautiful in all its parts, fertile to the utmost extent of man's necessities, and salubrious throughout every place and every clime. The *animal* world shall have all their venomous propensities removed, and the prophet's description shall be fully realized among them, "the wolf dwelling with the lamb, and the leopard lying down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion, and the fatling together; and the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand upon the cockatrice' den: they shall not hurt nor destroy throughout God's holy mountain[b]." The whole *rational* world shall then be converted unto God; "for the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea."

[a] Gen. iii. 17, 18. [b] Isai. xi. 6—9.

Thus throughout the whole creation shall, to a certain extent, the paradisiacal state be restored.]

Now, as this will be a state of inconceivable blessedness, the whole creation is represented as looking and longing for it—

[It will be remembered that our blessed Lord was foretold as "the person whom all nations desired." Now he was foretold under that character, *not because all nations did desire him*, but because all nations, if they had known him, would have desired him. So here the whole creation is said to look and wait for the day spoken of in my text, *not because they do indeed expect it with such solicitude*, but because they would expect it in that way, if they were fully apprised of the blessedness attendant on it. And, as in other passages of Holy Writ, the woods and the hills are often spoken of as participating in, and expressing, the joys of God's people; so here, by a very strong figure, the whole creation is represented as *stretching forth the neck*[c], with eagerness, in looking for it, and *groaning with impatience*[d] for its arrival; yea, and as *experiencing the pangs of parturition* till they shall be liberated from their present burthen[e]. Nor are these expressions at all too strong, if the different parts of the creation were capable of discerning and appreciating the blessedness of the change that shall await each in its proper sphere, and to the full extent of its capacity. Every part is at this time "under the bondage of corruption," that is, under the curse introduced by sin; and every part, according to its capacity, shall be delivered from that bondage, and be brought, so far as it is capable of it, into a participation of the "liberty that shall then be accorded to the children of God." These were the feelings assigned to the inanimate creation at the first advent of our Lord in his abased state[f]; and the same creatures may well be said to pant for a renewal of their joys, when our Lord shall come again to establish his kingdom over the face of the whole earth.]

But all this may, almost without a figure, be uttered as descriptive of,

II. The state of God's children in particular—

These have already the foretaste of these joys in their own souls—

[The "first-fruits" were a part of any produce, devoted to God as an acknowledgment that the whole was from him:

[c] ἀποκαραδοκία. [d] συστενάζει. [e] συνωδίνει.
[f] Ps. xcvi. 11—13. and xcviii. 4—9.

and whilst they sanctified the whole harvest, they assured to the possessor the full enjoyment of it[g]. Now the harvest of "the Spirit" is that abundant effusion of holiness and happiness which God will pour forth on his people in the latter day, not unlike to what they enjoyed on the day of Pentecost, or to that which our first parents possessed in Paradise. And "of this Spirit God's people have now the first-fruits." They are renewed in the spirit of their mind after the very image of their God in righteousness and true holiness: and, with this renewal of their nature, they are also "filled with joy of the Holy Ghost;" even with a "joy that is unspeakable and glorified." Now it might be supposed that these, by reason of their present attainments, would be less anxious for the promised period before referred to, when the whole creation shall be restored, as it were, to its primeval purity and happiness. But the very reverse of this is the case: for in every age these are the persons who most pant and long for the promised felicity. Yes, says the Apostle, "ourselves who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, even the redemption of our body."]

Of the joys they now experience they look forward to the everlasting consummation—

["Believers are now the children of God[h]," his children both by adoption and grace. Now adoption, amongst the Romans, was two-fold; first, *private*, in the house, and afterwards *public*, in the forum. The former of these every believer has received already through the operation of the Spirit of God upon his soul[i]: but for the latter he waits till that period when God shall come to gather together his elect from every quarter of the world, to restore to every soul its long mouldered body, and to make the whole man, in body and soul, eternally blessed in his presence. That is the period when "the body will enjoy the redemption" that has been long since possessed by the soul; and a blessedness will be then imparted to the whole man, of which his present most exalted happiness is but an earnest and foretaste. Now the believer knows that that period shall arrive: and he longs for it, and "groans within himself," through the ardour of his desires after it. Even here his anticipations of it have been sweet, infinitely beyond the powers of language to express, ("a joy *unspeakable;*") what then shall the full possession be in the complete enjoyment of his God? From the *private* adoption, by the testimony of the Spirit, he has been almost wrapt at times into the third heaven, notwithstanding the clog which his body has imposed upon his

[g] Deut. xxvi. 2, 10, 11. Prov. iii. 9. [h] 1 John iii. 1.
[i] ver. 15, 16.

soul. What then shall the *public* manifestation of this honour in the presence of the whole assembled universe be, when his "redeemed body" shall possess all the purity and perfection of his soul, and not only *partake of* all the joys of his soul, but *aid the soul* in its everlasting possession of them? I wonder not that "St. Paul *groaned* in this body, being burthened; yea, that he *groaned, earnestly desiring* to be clothed upon with his heavenly house, namely, with his body in its renovated and perfect state[k]. This *ought to be* the state of every true believer; and *it will be* in proportion as he lives nigh to God, and has "his conversation in heaven."

By some the period referred to in my text is supposed to commence at the Millennium, of which time St. Peter speaks when he says, "We look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness[l]." And, if any find comfort in that view of the subject, I would not move a finger to rob them of it. I have no objection to persons following their own views of Scripture truth: every man has the same right to do it as I myself have. But, when these uncertain matters are made the subject of disputation in the Church of God, to the creating of dissensions and divisions, and to the turning of the minds of pious persons from the more clear and fundamental truths of the Gospel, then I bitterly regret it, and am ready to weep over it as "a device of Satan to turn men from the simplicity that is in Christ." If any choose to apply this passage to the Millennium, and to look for its accomplishment then, let them: but let them bear with those who cannot see with their eyes, or feel that there is any advantage in their views. Let all agree in *this*, to look and groan inwardly for the time of their consummate felicity, whether it occur at a little earlier or a little later period: for *this* is the point in which all are to agree; and in *this* consists the highest attainment of the Christian life: "We come behind in no gift, whilst we are waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ[m]" to perfect our felicity; and we are sure, that "to those who so look for him, he will appear a second time unto their everlasting salvation[n]." My prayer therefore for all of you, my brethren, is, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into a patient waiting for Christ[o]."]

That I may bring this subject home more powerfully to men's business and bosoms, I would add,

1. Let us not take up our rest in this world—

[This world is but a passage to a better, a wilderness which we must pass through in our way to the heavenly

[k] 2 Cor. v. 2—5. [l] 2 Pet. iii. 13. [m] 1 Cor. i. 7.
[n] Heb. ix. 28. [o] 2 Thess. iii. 5.

Canaan. As to our present accommodations, we need not be much concerned, whether they be a little more or less suited to our present convenience. We are but "pilgrims and sojourners here," hoping in due season to attain our rest hereafter. Let us then look forward to "that rest which remaineth for us," and under all existing difficulties derive our consolations from the prospect of the happiness that awaits us. This is, not the duty merely, but the high privilege, of the Christian. This it is which raises the Christian above all the world besides. What are crowns and kingdoms, if a man have no prospect beyond the grave? On the other hand, What is martyrdom itself to one who sees it as the very door of heaven, and knows that the body which agonized for a few moments, shall reign in glory for evermore? I say then to every one amongst you, "Set not your affection on things below, but on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God," and where "all who suffer with him now, shall be glorified together with him" to all eternity.]

2. Let us press forward more earnestly after the happiness reserved for us—

[Who can conceive the blessedness of that state to which we are hastening? If "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived the things which are enjoyed by God's people in this present world," how much less can any just conception be formed of their future state? If the possession of the first-fruits be so glorious, what must the harvest be! If the privilege of being God's children be so delightful now, that the very hope of it raises us above all the joys or sorrows of this present world, what shall the full manifestation of it be when all the interests of time and sense are for ever passed away? Let us then survey more and more the blessedness of heaven, where we shall behold face to face that Saviour who died for us, and be with him for ever, possessing, according to their capacity, all the fulness of his beauty, his felicity, and his glory. Dear brethren, let this prospect swallow up every inferior consideration, and animate us to run with ever increasing diligence the race that is set before us. Let us "forget all that is behind, and reach forward to that which is before, and press on with all imaginable ardour for the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus." And, in the desire of that full blessedness, let us cry continually with the beloved Apostle, "Come, Lord, and take me to thyself; yea, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."]

MDCCCLXXV.

THE OFFICE OF HOPE.

Rom. viii. 24, 25. *We are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.*

IF it be asked, What is that feeling of the mind, which, beyond all others, gives life and activity to rational agents? we answer, It is *hope*. Influenced by this, all persons in every department of life put forth their energies: the merchant braves the storms; the soldier encounters his enemies; the student consumes the midnight oil in his laborious researches. To this also is chiefly to be referred the Christian's exertions in the service of his God. True it is, that love and gratitude have a constraining influence upon him: but it is also true, that these principles would be ineffectual to carry his soul through all its trials, if they were not confirmed and animated by the yet more powerful operation of hope. Great, no doubt, are the privileges and enjoyments of the Christian in this present world: he is a child of the Most High God; and has "a spirit of adoption within him, enabling him to cry, Abba, Father." He has also "the witness of the Spirit testifying both in and by his own spirit, that he is a child of God." But, after all, little solid comfort would he derive from these reflections, if he did not look forward to an inheritance, to which, by virtue of his relation to God, he is entitled. Hence the Apostle represents the Lord's people as deriving their chief consolation from the prospect which they have beyond the grave[a], yea, and "as being saved by hope," through the operation of which upon their minds "they patiently wait for" the termination and issue of all their present trials.

We propose on the present occasion to consider the *nature* and *effects* of the Christian's hope:

I. Its nature—

[a] ver. 23.

We are most generally said to be saved by *faith*[b]: but here salvation is ascribed to *hope*. There is, in fact, a near affinity between the two: and we cannot adopt any better method of illustrating the nature and operations of hope than by instituting a comparison between it and faith. That faith and hope are very nearly allied, appears from this, that in St. Paul's account of Abraham, he represents the two principles as concurring with each other, and having an united influence on his obedience: "Against hope," says he, Abraham "believed in hope[c]."

In some things the two principles agree—

[They agree *in their origin*: both of them are the gift of God, and the fruits of the Holy Spirit's operation on the soul. Have we *faith*? it is the gift of God[d], the fruit of a divine operation[e], a work of grace[f]: and if we have *hope*, we have been begotten to it by God himself[g], even by his gracious influence on our souls[h]: and to his Holy Spirit must be ascribed all its increase in the soul, together with all the peace and joy that flow from it[i].

They agree also *in their use*: both the one and the other being intended to further the salvation of our souls. As we are saved by faith[k], so are we by hope also[l].

They agree yet further *in their duration*: they have no scope for exercise beyond this present life. Faith is by St. Paul opposed to sight[m]; and as in heaven "we shall see God face to face, and know him even as we are known," the dark and *enigmatical* visions of faith will cease[n]. In like manner we are told in our text, that "hope that is seen, is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" We shall have in heaven the actual possession of what is now the object of our hope. Then faith will be lost in sight, and hope in enjoyment.]

In other things the two principles materially differ—

[They differ *in their foundation*. Faith is founded solely on the veracity of God. Hope is founded, partly, on the word of God, and, partly on our conformity to that word. The word of God reveals a dispensation of mercy to sinful man. But what hope does that generate in the minds of the fallen

[b] Rom. v. 1. [c] Rom. iv. 18. [d] Eph. ii. 8. Phil. i. 29.
[e] Col. ii. 12. [f] Acts xviii. 27. [g] 1 Pet. i. 3.
[h] 2 Thess. ii. 16. [i] Rom. xv. 13. [k] Rom. x. 9.
[l] Rom. viii. 24. [m] 2 Cor. v. 7.
[n] 1 Cor. xiii. 12. See the Greek.

angels? They believe it, as much as we do: but, having no evidence in themselves that they comply with the terms on which that mercy is vouchsafed, they do not hope in it: "they believe and tremble[o]." It is the penitent alone that has hope in God: and his hope arises from his consciousness, that he does embrace the mercy offered him, and conform to the terms which God in his wisdom has prescribed to all who shall ultimately be saved by it.

They differ also *in their qualities*. Faith is properly a virtue; and the want of it under all circumstances is a sin. As a virtue, there is no other so frequently or so highly commended; (where that has been exercised, humility, and love, and every other grace that has been exercised with it, has been overlooked, and *that alone* commended[p]:) and as a sin, no other is so strongly reprobated as unbelief[q]. Hope, on the other hand, may rather be called a privilege than a virtue; and despondency, a curse, rather than a sin. So far indeed as hope agrees with faith in its foundation, so far it agrees with it in its moral qualities: but as far as it is founded, not on the word of God, but in a man's own conformity to that word, so far its moral qualities differ from those of faith: for instead of its being a sin for an ungodly man to despair of salvation *in his present state*, it is a sin for him to indulge a hope: it is the vilest presumption in him to think that he can ever be saved in an impenitent and unbelieving state: and to despair of salvation *in such a state* is his very first step towards heaven.

They differ yet further *in their objects*. Faith is incomparably more extensive than hope. Faith has respect to both good and evil: it embraces in its view both heaven and hell: but hope has good alone for its object. Faith comprehends every thing that God has revealed, whether past, present, or future: hope looks only to what is future. Faith regards every declaration of God, whether historical or prophetic, promissory or menacing, hortatory or preceptive: but hope has respect to the promises alone. It invariably terminates on some good, which is yet future, and which God has promised.

Lastly, They differ also *in their offices*. Though both of them agree in their general use, to promote the salvation of men, they have exceedingly distinct offices. Faith apprehends the Lord Jesus Christ, and, by uniting us to him, interests us in all that he has done and suffered for us: it also receives out of his fulness all those graces and blessings which the Father has been pleased to treasure up in him for the benefit of his Church. Hope merely expects those blessings: and, by presenting future good to our view, stimulates us to diligence in the pursuit of it. Both of these principles "*save* us;" but

[o] Jam. ii. 19. [p] Luke vii. 50. [q] Mark xvi. 16.

faith brings that good into the soul which hope had only anticipated; and, by presenting invisible realities to our view, gives to hope a more ample scope for exercise. Faith is the parent of hope: but hope, once formed in the soul, becomes an active helper to faith. Neither can operate to any good effect without the other. Faith without hope is paralysed; and hope without faith is dead: but, when faith duly apprehends Christ, and hope leads us to wait patiently for his full salvation, then the work of God goes on prosperously within us, and we are in the sure way to everlasting life.]

Such being the *nature* of the Christian's hope, we proceed to inquire into,

II. Its effects—

These are represented under the general term, Salvation; "We are saved by it." But *how* does it effect salvation for us? We answer, By it,

1. We are comforted in our afflictions—

[Afflictions are the lot of all, but especially of the Lord's people. All of them have a cross to bear; and tribulation is their appointed way to the kingdom of heaven. Indeed, so painful are the trials which they have to endure for the Lord's sake, that, "if in this life only they had hope, they would be of all men most miserable," or, at least, most to be pitied[r]. But the prospect of eternal glory so lightens their burthen, as to make it quite easy to be borne[s]. To this effect the Apostle speaks in the chapter before us; (and he delivers the sentiment as the result of his own most careful investigation:) "I reckon (I *compute* by accurate calculation) that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us[t]." In another epistle he gives a full and accurate description of his views and feelings on this subject. "He was continually delivered unto death for Jesus' sake:" but he was perfectly satisfied with his condition, because "he knew, that He who had raised up the Lord Jesus, would raise him up also by Jesus, and present him, together with his beloved converts[u]," "faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy[x]." The prospect of that blessed event made all his "afflictions light," yea, lightness itself[y]. It may be thought, perhaps, that this superabundant grace was given to him as an Apostle, and is not to be expected by us. But it is to be expected by every saint whom "God hath begotten to a lively hope:" for our blessed Lord tells all his followers,

[r] ἐλεεινότεροι, 1 Cor. xv. 19. [s] Acts xx. 24. [t] ver. 18.
[u] 2 Cor. iv. 11—14. [x] Jude, ver. 24.
[y] 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. See the Greek.

not merely to bear their persecutions with patience, but to make them a ground of joy and exultation, because of the glorious recompence that awaits them in the eternal world[a]. And who that has ever suffered much for righteousness' sake, has not found this to be the effect of his hope towards God? Many amongst us may say with David, "I should have fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living[a]." But under the influence of this hope their consolations have abounded in proportion to, yea, and far above, all their accumulated afflictions[b].]

2. We are supported in our conflicts—

[To all true Christians there are, on some occasions, "fightings without, and fears within." But the grace of which we are speaking, serves them as an helmet, that will resist the stroke of their most potent adversary. In the panoply of God, this piece of armour yields to none in point of efficacy and importance: salvation is pre-eminently ascribed to it: it is called, "The helmet of salvation[c]." It is well known, that persons clothed with armour from head to foot, especially if contending with persons not so protected, enter into the combat with peculiar confidence[d]. And thus especially does the Christian whose mind is well established by hope: he is "strong and very courageous," not doubting but that God is with him, and that he shall be "more than conqueror through Him that loved him." The assaults which he has to sustain may indeed be violent and very terrible, even like the waves of the sea, that threaten to overwhelm the tempest-tossed bark. But his "hope, like an anchor sure and steadfast, enables him to out-ride the storm[e]." That "anchor cast within the vail," keeps his mind composed[f], and assures him, that he is safe, though earth and hell should combine their efforts to destroy him[g]. How this grace operated on the saints of old, we may see at large in St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews. Many, under its influence, "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods[h]:" and many, even of the weaker sex, when called to endure the severest torments that could be inflicted on them, "would not so much as accept the deliverance" that was offered them, because "they hoped assuredly to obtain a better resurrection[i]." Thus will it operate on us also. Precisely as the expectation of a future harvest leads the husbandman to encounter all dif-

[a] Matt. v. 10—12. [a] Ps. xxvii. 13. [b] 2 Cor. i. 5.
[c] 1 Thess. v. 8. with Eph. vi. 17.
[d] This was particularly observable in the French cuirassiers at the memorable battle of Waterloo.
[e] Heb. vi. 19. [f] Isai. xxvi. 3. [g] 2 Tim. i. 12.
[h] Heb. x. 34. [i] Heb. xi. 35.

ficulties, and cheers his mind during the long continuance of an inclement winter, so the prospect of reaping in due season enables the Christian to endure unto the end[k]. He has never seen the felicity which he pants after; but he expects assuredly the ultimate possession of it; and therefore "patiently waits for" the final consummation of all his hopes[l].]

3. We are encouraged in our exertions—

[To a man who has heaven in his eye, nothing is impossible. Behold Moses, when at the summit of human grandeur and power: an alternative was before him, "to suffer affliction with the people of God, or to enjoy the pleasures" and honours of the court of Pharaoh: and which did he prefer? He chose "the reproach of Christ, esteeming it to be greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt." And what guided him to this strange decision? it was hope; "he had respect unto the recompence of the reward[m]." In like manner St. Paul "pressed forward with incessant ardour in his heavenly course, forgetting what was behind, and reaching forward to what was before." And, if we inquire into the principle which animated him to such exertions, we shall find that it was precisely that which is mentioned in our text,—the hope and prospect of securing "the prize of his high calling." We may even say that our blessed Lord himself, as a man, was actuated by the same divine principle; since it was "for the joy that was set before him, that he endured the cross and despised the shame, and rested not till he sat down at the right hand of the throne of God[n]." And we too, if we would "run our race with patience," must imitate him in this respect[o]; we must keep our eye steadily fixed on him, and continue without intermission "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ[p]." Then shall we "be steadfast, unmoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord," when we are convinced in our mind, "that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord[q]."]

ADDRESS—

1. Those whose hopes are presumptuous—

[There is no man who does not hope that he shall be saved at last. But we ought to be "able to give a reason of the hope that is in us[r]." If we cannot do this, and a satisfactory reason too, our hope is altogether vain and delusive. We have before said, that hope, as well as faith, must, in part at least, be founded on the word of God. Look to it then, that your hope is truly scriptural, and that you seek with all

[k] Jam. v. 7, 8. [l] Rom. viii. 25. [m] Heb. xi. 24—26.
[n] Heb. xii. 2. [o] Heb. xii. 1. [p] Tit. ii. 11—13.
[q] 1 Cor. xv. 58. [r] 1 Pet. iii. 15.

diligence that humility and contrition, that faith and love, that purity and holiness, that zeal and devotedness to God, which are the distinguishing characters of all who shall ultimately attain the kingdom of heaven. If you are "without Christ, you are without hope[s]:" but if you flee to him for refuge, you may be perfectly assured of acceptance with him[t].]

2. Those who are harassed with doubts and fears—

[There are many, of whom there is reason to hope well, who yet do not enjoy that comfort in their minds which the religion of Christ is calculated to impart. In some this disquietude arises from imperfect views of the Gospel: they do not see the freeness and fulness of that salvation that is provided for them in the Gospel; and they are looking for some qualifications in themselves to warrant their confidence in the Saviour. They do not distinguish aright between the offices of faith and hope: they do not see that the vilest creatures under heaven are warranted to believe in Christ for salvation, and to hope for acceptance with him *in his appointed way of penitence and faith*; but that to hope for heaven as persons actually brought into a state of salvation, requires an evidence in our own souls, that we are, in a measure at least, transformed into the Divine image. To such persons then we would say, Do not look for qualifications in yourselves to warrant your application to Christ, or your affiance in him; but, whilst you accept salvation freely through his blood and righteousness, look to him also for the communications of his grace to renew and sanctify your hearts, and to make you meet for his inheritance. With some indeed these doubts and fears originate rather in a consciousness of some unmortified lust, or of habitual negligence in the divine life: and where this is the case, we must declare, that peace and confidence would be a curse to them. We must "awake to righteousness, and not sin," if we would have any comfortable evidence that we are the Lord's people, or any happiness in looking forward to the eternal world. But, from whatever cause men's doubts arise, we would address to them that encouraging exhortation, "Turn ye to your strong hold, ye prisoners of hope[u]."]

3. Those who have a good hope through grace—

[Rejoice in the exalted privilege to which God has called you; and endeavour to render to the Lord according to the benefits he has conferred upon you. It is said by St. John, that, "he that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as Christ is pure[x]." Take care then that your hope operate in this way: let it stir you up to the utmost possible exertions in the

[s] Eph. ii. 12. [t] Ps. cxxx. 7, 8. John vi. 37.
[u] Zech. ix. 12. [x] 1 John iii. 3.

way of holiness. Rest not in low attainments: think nothing yet attained, whilst any thing remains to be attained. Keep your evidences clear: let them not be clouded by any unmortified lust, or secret neglect: and then shall you "hold fast the rejoicing of your hope firm unto the end[y]." This is the way to be both holy and happy: and, thus living, you may be well assured, that your "hope shall never make you ashamed[z]."]

[y] Heb. iii. 6. [z] Rom. v. 5.

MDCCCLXXVI.

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT IN STRENGTHENING MEN FOR SUFFERING OR DUTY.

Rom. viii. 26. *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*

A HOPE of eternal happiness is as an anchor to the troubled soul; it enables a person to bear up under the heaviest afflictions; but the mind of a believer would soon faint, if it were not strengthened from above. God therefore communicates his Spirit to his people under their trials. By his Spirit he enables them to go forward in the way of duty. St. Paul has been speaking of sufferings as the Christian's portion here[a]. He has mentioned "hope" as a principal support to the soul under them[b]. He now specifies the Holy Spirit's agency as another mean of confirming and establishing the soul.

This agency of the Spirit we may consider,

I. In seasons of suffering—

Men are, in themselves, too weak to sustain many or severe trials—

[There is much impatience in the heart of every man. It too often discovers itself even in those who are, on the whole, pious. Sometimes it is called forth by small and trifling occasions. How passionately did Jonah resent the loss of his gourd[c]! How bitterly would the Disciples have revenged an act of unkindness[d]! There is no trial so small but it would

[a] ver. 17, 18. [b] ver. 24. [c] Jonah iv. 8, 9. [d] Luke ix. 54.

overcome us, if we were left to ourselves; and they who have endured heavy trials, often faint under small ones.]

But God sends his Spirit to help the infirmities of his people—

[We cannot exactly discriminate between the Spirit's agency and theirs. Indeed the Spirit acts in and by their endeavours[e]. He leads them to see the source and tendency of their trials. He strengthens the natural vigour of their minds. He suggests to them many consolatory thoughts. Thus he fulfils to them that gracious declaration[f]—]

These operations of the Spirit are yet more manifest,

II. In seasons of prayer—

God's people "know not even what to pray for"—

[A great variety of passions may agitate their minds. When this is the case, their petitions may be unbecoming and sinful. Even a sense of guilt will often stop the mouth before God[g]. Sometimes also trouble itself will utterly overwhelm the soul, and incapacitate it for prayer[h]. Our Lord himself seems to have experienced such a perturbation of mind[i]; nor are there any praying persons who have not often found themselves straitened in the exercise of prayer.]

It yet oftener happens that they know not how to pray "as they ought"—

[We may easily utter good and suitable words before God; but it is by no means easy to pray with fervent importunity. An insurmountable languor or obduracy will sometimes come upon the soul. Nor though we were ever so fervent can we always exercise faith. Many have felt the same workings of mind with David[k]— At such seasons they cannot pray as they ought.]

But the Holy Spirit will "make intercession for them"—

[Christ is properly our Advocate and Intercessor[l]: but the Spirit also may be said to "intercede for us." The Spirit intercedes *in* us at the *throne of grace*, while Christ intercedes

[e] This is implied in the term συναντιλαμβάνεται—"Metaphora ab oneribus sumpta, quæ, utrinque admotis manibus, sublevantur." Beza in Luc. x. 40. Feeble therefore as our strength is, we must exert it: and if we cheerfully put our hands to the work, the Holy Spirit will always afford us effectual succour.

[f] Ps. cxlvii. 3.
[g] Compare Ps. xxxii. 3, 5.
[h] Ps. lxxvii. 4.
[i] John xii. 27.
[k] Ps. lxxvii. 7—10.
[l] 1 John ii. 1.

for us at the *throne of glory*. He sometimes enables us to pour out our hearts with fluency. This he does by discovering to us our wants, quickening our affections, and testifying to us God's willingness to answer prayer. He does not, however, always operate in this way.]

He will make intercession "with unutterable groans"—

[The joy of Christians is represented as being sometimes inexpressible[m]: but frequently a sense of sin overwhelms them. Then sighs and groans are the natural language of their hearts. Nor are such inarticulate prayers unacceptable to God. We have a remarkable instance of their success in the history of our Lord[n]— Perhaps no prayers are more pleasing to God than these[o].]

INFER—

1. How many are there who live all their days without prayer!

[Those in whom the Spirit intercedes are often made to feel their inability to pray aright. Under a sense of their infirmities they are constrained to cry to God for the help of his Spirit: but many pass all their days without any painful sense of their weakness. They satisfy themselves with a formal performance of their duties. Such persons never pray in an acceptable manner[p]. Real prayer implies fervour and importunity[q]; and it is in vain to think that we have the spirit of grace, if we have not also the spirit of supplication[r]. May WE therefore never be found of the number of those, whom the prophet and our blessed Lord have, on account of their formality in prayer, condemned as hypocrites[s]—]

2. What comfort may this passage afford to praying people!

[Many are discouraged by the difficulties which they experience in the duty of prayer. If they feel not an enlargement of heart, they doubt whether their prayer will be accepted. But God will notice the groaning of his people[t]. Such inward desires may often be more pleasing to him than the most fluent petitions: they are, in fact, the voice of God's Spirit within us. Let not any then be dejected on account of occasional deadness. Let every one rather follow the advice of the prophet[u]— God, in due time, will assuredly fulfil his promise[x]—]

[m] 1 Pet. i. 8. [n] John xi. 33, 38, 41. [o] Ps. li. 17.
[p] John iv. 23 [q] Isai. lxiv. 7. [r] Zech. xii. 10.
[s] Matt. xv. 7, 8. [t] Ps. xxxviii. 8, 9. [u] Hab. ii 3.
[x] Ps. lxxxi. 10.

MDCCCLXXVII.

ALL THINGS WORK FOR GOOD.

Rom. viii. 28. *We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

TRUE believers have the greatest encouragement to draw nigh to God; they have supernatural assistance when pouring out their hearts before him, and are assured by God himself that their prayers shall be heard; yet, sometimes, like the Israelites in Egypt, the more they renew their requests, the more they find their burthens increased[a]: hence, like them, they are also sometimes ready to murmur and despond[b]; but, by grace they are enabled to wait patiently the Lord's leisure, and invariably, in the issue, the clouds which they so much dreaded, burst in blessings on their heads.

This St. Paul declares to be the experience of all true believers. In his words I wish you to notice,

I. The description he gives of true Christians—

Christians are sometimes described in the Scriptures by their regard for God, and sometimes by God's regard for them. The text leads us to speak of them in both points of view:

1. Their regard to God—

[The "loving of God" is a character peculiar to true Christians: others are represented rather as "haters of God," and enemies to him in their minds[c]; but they who are partakers of his grace, have their natural enmity removed: they behold his excellency, and are sensible of their obligations to him: hence they love him, and strive to love him with their whole hearts.]

2. God's regard for them—

[Their regard for him sprang not from any good dispositions in themselves; it resulted purely from the manifestations of God's love to them: he formed "purposes" of love to them from all eternity[d]. In due time he "called" them by his grace,

[a] Exod. v. 6—8. [b] Exod. v. 20, 21.
[c] Rom. i. 30. Col. i. 21. [d] Jer. xxxi. 3.

and made them his people; and this distinguishing favour is the true source of their love to him. To this effect both our Lord and his beloved Apostle testify[e]— To the eternal purposes of God, therefore, and not to the inclinations of our carnal minds, must all the good that is in us be traced.]

To persons of this description the Apostle announces,

II. His strange yet assured confidence respecting them—

It is under sufferings that the superiority of the Christian's state is to be seen to the greatest advantage. Of them the Apostle speaks; and declares that, of whatever kind they be, they shall work for the good of them that love God—

[The Christian may be called to bear the heaviest *afflictions;* but they shall bring him to consideration, stir him up to prayer, wean him from the world, and lead him to seek his rest above — — — He may be assaulted also with the most distressing *temptations;* but these will shew him the evil of his heart, and the faithfulness of his God: they will also teach him to sympathize with his tempted brethren: even *death* itself will be among the number of the things that shall prove beneficial to him. This is the most formidable enemy to fallen man: it cuts him off from all means and opportunities of salvation, and seals him up under endless and irremediable misery; but to a true Christian it is a most invaluable treasure[f]. It puts a period to all his sorrows and temptations, and introduces him to the immediate, everlasting enjoyment of his God.]

Nor can we doubt of this blessed truth—

[The Apostle speaks of it not as a matter of conjecture, but of certainty: as he knew it, so may "we know" it, from the declarations and promises of God[g]. Both David and Paul have attested it also from their own experience[h]: nor is there any Christian in whom it has not been realized. It is not however *singly* or *separately* that all things work for good, but as taken "*together*" in a collective view. Separately considered, many things may have wrought for evil, by producing sinful tempers or actions; but when viewed as connected with *all* their effects and consequences, the most untoward circumstances will be found to have wrought for good.]

This subject naturally SUGGESTS,

[e] John xv. 16. 1 John iv. 19. [f] 1 Cor. iii. 22,
[g] Ps. xxv. 10, [h] Ps. cxix. 71. Phil. i. 19.

1. A rule whereby to judge of God's electing love—

[Our election of God can be known only by its effects[l]. To ascertain it, we must inquire whether we have been *called* by his grace, and whether, in consequence of that call, we *love God* supremely? If we experience these effects, we may safely conclude, that God has entertained eternal purposes of love towards us; but if we trace not these effects, our pretensions to an interest in his electing love is a fatal delusion. Let them, in whom these evidences are found, rejoice; but rejoice with trembling.]

2. A ground of comfort under his apparent frowns—

[Afflictions are not at the present joyous, but grievous; and because they are his rod, we are ready to say, "All these things are against me." But the Scripture tells us, that "the trial of our faith is precious[k]." Let the afflicted then consider what "good" may be accruing to them. Their troubles may be working so as to discover, prevent, punish, or destroy *sin*; ———or they may be working to impart, exercise, strengthen, or perfect *grace* ——— What reason, in either case, have the afflicted to take comfort! We think little of inconveniences if they do but promote our *temporal* interest. Should we then be averse to any trials that may tend to our *spiritual* advantage? Let us wait to see "the end of the Lord," and be solicitous rather about our future benefit, than our present ease.]

3. A motive to love and serve God with our whole hearts—

[Things are never represented as working for the good of the wicked; on the contrary, their temporal "blessings are often cursed" to them; yea, even spiritual blessings only aggravate their guilt and condemnation[l]. Christ himself proves, not a Saviour, but a stumbling-block to them[m]. But for God's people, all things, sin excepted, work for good. Should they not then love him for such distinguishing mercy? Can they ever do enough for him, who so marvellously overrules all events for them?]

[l] 1 Thess. i. 4, 5.
2 Cor. ii. 16.
[k] 1 Pet. i. 7.
[m] 1 Pet. ii. 7, 8.

MDCCCLXXVIII.

PREDESTINATION CONSIDERED.

Rom. viii. 29, 30. *Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover*

whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

THE subject of predestination is confessedly very deep and mysterious: nor should it be entered upon without extreme caution, both as to the mode of stating it, and to the persons before whom it is stated. It is much to be lamented, that there exists in the minds of many a strong prejudice against it; insomuch that the very mention of it is deemed by them little short of heresy; I had almost said, of blasphemy. But this surely is not a way in which any part of God's revealed will is to be treated. That the inspired writers do speak of it, is undeniable: and that our own Church also has made it an Article of faith, which all her ministers and members are to receive, is also certain. On these accounts we must not discard the doctrine through fear of offending any who may be hostile to it; though on the other hand we ought not so frequently or so strongly to insist upon it as unnecessarily to wound and grieve them. The true medium which a minister should aim at, is, to give to this doctrine, as well as to every other, as precisely as possible that measure of prominence and importance which it bears in the sacred writings. To be bringing it forward on every occasion, just as if it were among the first principles of religion, we consider as very injudicious, and detrimental to the best interests of religion: but to omit it altogether, we deem unworthy of a faithful servant of Christ. To the doctrines which have an opposite aspect, we give all due weight; and therefore we may be allowed to put this also before you, according as it is plainly declared in the passage which is now under our consideration.

The Apostle having designated "those who love God" as persons "who have been called according to God's purpose," proceeds to shew, that from first to last God is the author of their salvation: he foreknew, and predestinated them from all eternity to the privileges which they enjoy; and will infallibly complete his purpose respecting them, in their effectual

calling, their free justification from all their sins, and their final glorification at his right hand for ever.

In the Apostle's statement we may see,

I. The principal ends of predestination—

God acts in all things according to his own sovereign will and pleasure: yet is that will regulated by the counsels of infallible wisdom[a]. Whilst therefore in all things he consults primarily his own glory, he has respect to such ends and objects as are most suited to promote his glory. The ends he has proposed to himself, in predestinating men to life, were two-fold: the *immediate* end respected *us;* and the *ultimate* end respected *his beloved Son,* through whom all his purposes were to be accomplished.

1. The *immediate* end respected *us*—

[He decreed that all the objects of his choice "should be conformed to the image of his Son." But how were they to be conformed to him? We answer, In *holiness,* in *sufferings,* and in *glory.*

We are to be conformed to Christ *in holiness.* Our blessed Lord was altogether without spot or blemish, a perfect exemplar of universal holiness: his bitterest enemies could not find any imperfection in him; and St. John's testimony concerning him is, "In him was no sin[b]." Such, "according to the measure of the gift of Christ," are we to be also[c]. Like him we must live, not unto ourselves, but unto our God alone; making it "our meat and our drink to do his holy will." Though in the world, we must not be *of* the world, any more than he was[d]: we must rise superior to all its concerns, resist all its temptations, mortify all its lusts, and "walk in all things as Christ walked[e]." The same mind altogether that was in him, must be in us also[f]. And *to this we are predestinated.* We were not chosen of God from eternity, or made the subjects of his new-creating grace in time, because we *were* holy, or because *he foresaw that we should be* holy; but that we "*might be* holy:" "we are *his workmanship,* created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them[g]."

We are to be conformed to Christ *in sufferings.* Throughout his whole life our Saviour was "a man of sorrows, and

[a] Eph. i. 5, 11. [b] 1 John iii. 5. [c] Eph. iv. 7.
[d] John xvii. 14, 16. [e] 1 John ii. 6. [f] Phil. ii. 5.
[g] Eph. i. 4. and ii. 10. These two passages deserve the most attentive consideration in this view.

acquainted with grief." "Though he was a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered:" and "he was made perfect through sufferings." In like manner we also must be "a poor and afflicted people[h]." We must "take up our cross daily, and follow him:" we must be "hated of all men for his sake." "If they called the Master of the house Beelzebub, much more will they those of his household." "The servant cannot expect to be above his Master." We must "follow him without the camp, bearing his reproach." *To this also we are predestinated.* So St. Paul expressly affirmed respecting himself[i]; and so he affirms respecting us also: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution[k]."

We are to be conformed to Christ also *in glory.* "He is now seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high:" and there shall we also in due time be seated. Yes, "having suffered with him, we shall also reign with him," and "be glorified together[l]." We shall be like him in glory: "our vile *body* will be fashioned like unto his glorious body[m]: our *soul* also will be changed into his perfect image[n]; and our blessedness be altogether assimilated to his[o]. And *to all of this also our predestination extends.* It is not to the means of grace only that "we are chosen, but to salvation itself, and to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ[p]."]

2. The *ultimate* end respected *our Lord Jesus Christ himself*—

[The first-born were entitled to many privileges: to them belonged dominion, and the priesthood, and a double portion of the inheritance. In respect of all the rest of the creation, not excepting even the angels themselves, we may be styled the first-born[q]. The whole family of believers are "kings and priests unto God," and are entitled to inherit the kingdom of our heavenly Father[r]. But in respect of us, Christ is the First-born; for "He in all things must have the pre-eminence[s]." He is to be the Head of all his Church and people[t]: and *to this He is predestinated;* yea, it is in order to this that they also are predestinated to the attainment of his glory. It was decreed in the eternal counsels of his Father, that "if he would make his soul an offering for sin," he should have "a seed to serve him," and should assuredly "be satisfied with the travail

[h] Zeph. iii. 12. [i] 1 Thess. iii. 3, 4. [k] 2 Tim. iii. 12.
[l] ver. 17. with 2 Tim. ii. 12. [m] Phil. iii. 21.
[n] 1 John iii. 2. [o] Rev. iii. 21.
[p] 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14. See also Acts xiii. 48. and 1 Thess. v. 9.
[q] Exod. iv. 22. Heb. xii. 23. [r] Rev. i. 6. Matt. xxv. 24.
[s] Col. i. 18. [t] Eph. i. 21, 22.

of his soul[u]." Had not this been absolutely decreed, it might have happened, that not so much as one might ever have been saved, and that, consequently, Christ might have shed his blood in vain. For, if every thing had been left entirely dependent on the free will of man, all might have used their free will precisely in the same way; and every child of man might have rejected him, exactly as the great mass of mankind are actually doing. But can we conceive that God would have given his Son to bear the iniquities of a ruined world, and have left it to mere chance, whether any single individual should ever obtain mercy through him, or become a jewel in his crown? We cannot conceive this; in fact, we know that it was not thus left to chance: we are sure, that there is a chosen people, who were from eternity given to Christ, to be redeemed by his blood, and to be saved by his grace: and that of those who were so given him, he neither has lost, nor ever will lose, so much as one[x]. How many these are, God alone knows: but we are sure they are "many," even "a multitude, whom no man can number, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation[y]."

It will probably be objected, that, if there be any who are thus predestinated unto life, the remainder must of necessity be ordained to death. But this we by no means admit. We grant that it is a difficulty which we are not able to explain: and we are contented to be ignorant of those things which it has not pleased God to reveal: and, whether men maintain or deny the doctrine in question, they will find themselves equally at a loss to make every thing intelligible to our finite capacities. It is Scripture, and Scripture alone, that must determine what is truth: and, as long as God declares with an oath that "he has no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he turn from his wickedness and live," so long we may rest assured, that, notwithstanding he has predestinated many to life, he has not predestinated one single soul to death; nor is the doctrine of absolute reprobation a just and necessary consequence of predestination. To draw the line, we again acknowledge to be beyond the power of any finite capacity: nor are we so much concerned to draw it as some may imagine: for, whether we admit or reject the doctrine of predestination, the same number will be saved at last. The man who denies that doctrine, will admit, that all who repent and believe in Christ, shall be saved, and that all the impenitent and unbelieving shall perish: and the same is admitted by those who maintain the doctrine of predestination: so that an equal number are saved on either plan. The only difference lies in this: that

[u] Ps. xxii. 30. with Isai. liii. 10, 11.
[x] John xvii. 2, 6, 9—12, 24. [y] Rev. v. 9. and vii. 9.

they who maintain this doctrine refer all the glory of man's salvation to God alone, making him the Author and the Finisher of it, from first to last: whilst those who deny the doctrine, give a great measure of the glory to the creature: for, however they may acknowledge that salvation through Christ is a gift to mankind at large, they make every individual the first moving cause of his own salvation: and exactly in proportion as they ascribe salvation either to human merit, or human agency as independent of God's grace, in that proportion they give to man a ground of glorying before God. Whatever they may say, according to them, it is man "who maketh himself to differ;" and his salvation must ultimately be ascribed to him as its true, proper, original, and moving cause. It is in this view that we are anxious to have the doctrine of predestination properly understood. As a mere abstract and speculative point, we could very contentedly wave the discussion of it: but, as involving the honour of God, we cannot but consider it as deserving our most serious attention. Nevertheless, if any man cannot receive it, we are not disposed to contend with him, but are contented with pressing on his consideration such matters only as are of primary and fundamental importance.]

Hoping however that the truth of the doctrine has approved itself to you, we shall proceed to state,

II. The way in which those ends are accomplished—

The order and method of God's dispensations, from eternity to eternity, are here clearly marked:

1. He "foreknows" men as objects of his love—

[As far as relates to mere prescience, all things are equally exposed to the view of the omnipresent God; and they who shall ultimately perish, are as much "foreknown" by him, as those that shall be saved. Many in this sense are foreknown by him, who are not predestinated, or called, or justified, nor ever will be glorified. But the word here used imports more than mere prescience, and includes an affectionate regard to the persons foreknown. In this sense it is elsewhere used[a]; and in this sense it must be understood in the passage before us. It is equivalent to that expression of the prophet Jeremiah, "He has loved us with an everlasting love[a]." And if we inquire into the reason of this love, we can assign no other than that which our blessed Lord has assigned, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight[b]."]

[a] John x. 14. Rom. xi. 2. and in 1 Pet. i. 20. the same word is rendered, by a far stronger term, "fore-ordained."

[a] Jer. xxxi. 3. [b] Matt. xi. 26.

2. He then "predestinates" them unto life—

[We speak of this, as though it succeeded the former in point of time: but with God there is no interval between his foreknowledge and fore-ordination. The inward affection, and the decree consequent upon it, are perfectly co-existent. But in God's predestination, he has respect both to the end and to the means; or rather *to* the end *by* the means. He does not ordain men to life in a way of sin, but, as we have already shewn, in a way of holiness. This is strongly asserted by St. Paul, in a fore-cited passage; "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, *through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth*[c]." And St. Peter to the same effect says, We are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, *through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ*[d]."]

3. In due time he "calls" them by his word and Spirit—

[The calling here spoken of, is not the mere external call of the Gospel: for many are so called, who, rejecting the call, are never justified or glorified. It is the internal call, whereby they are "made willing in the day of God's power." "The word comes to them in demonstration of the Spirit and of power," and they are "turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God[e]." This is the call which they experience, and which is the combined result of God's eternal purpose, and his effectual grace[f].]

4. These, as soon as they believe, he "justifies"—

[Whatever sins a man may have committed, they are all blotted out of the book of God's remembrance, the very instant that he obeys the Gospel call: "All that believe," says the Apostle, "are justified from all things[g]:" nor shall so much as one of "his sins and iniquities ever be remembered against him any more[h]."]

5. These, in due time, he glorifies—

[Yes, blessed be God, the chain of God's purposes reaches from eternity to eternity; nor shall one link of it be broken. The glorification of the saints is in part effected, even in this life; inasmuch as "the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon them[i];" and "they are changed into Christ's image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord[k]." But in

[c] 2 Thess. ii. 13. [d] 1 Pet. i. 2.
[e] 1 Cor. ii. 4. Acts xxvi. 18. [f] 2 Tim. i. 9.
[g] Acts xiii. 39. [h] Heb. viii. 12. [i] 1 Pet. iv. 14.
[k] 2 Cor. iii. 18.

heaven their felicity will be perfect: there "all that was in part will be done away:" they will "see as they are seen, and know as they are known;" and will be like, and with, their God, for ever and ever.

Here, it may be observed, is no distinct mention made of sanctification; and this may be supposed to give some countenance to those who imagine that sanctification is unnecessary to our final salvation. But sanctification is not omitted here: on the contrary, it is interwoven with the whole statement. For respecting whom are all these things spoken? Respecting those "who love God." Now love to God is the root and summit of all holiness: and therefore it is plain, that the persons spoken of as called, and justified, and glorified, must be holy. Moreover, the thing to which they are predestinated is, "to be conformed to the image of Christ:" but how can that be if they be not holy? Again; sanctification is yet further implied in their justification, from which it must of necessity spring, as an effect from a cause; as also in their glorification, to which it is necessary as a means to an end: for without a "meetness for their inheritance" they could not possibly enjoy it. We see therefore that the omission is in appearance only, and not in reality; and that there is no ground whatever afforded for antinomian licentiousness.]

Many who do not in their hearts disapprove of this doctrine, yet think of it as affording matter for speculation only, and as of little, if any, use with respect to practice.

But, in fact, it is a doctrine of great PRACTICAL IMPORTANCE; for it lays the axe to the root of,

1. All boasting—

[If any man be disposed to boast, he must, in his own opinion at least, either have merited salvation in some measure by his own goodness, or effected it by his own power. They who deny the doctrine of predestination do unavoidably give some occasion for men to boast: for whether they make God's predestination to be influenced by something done, or something foreseen, still it is the inherent and independent goodness of man that is made the determining ground of God's choice, and the original cause of man's salvation. But the doctrine of predestination plucks up all such conceits by the very root: it makes God's sovereign choice the primary source of man's happiness, and God's immutable purpose the means of its final consummation. If it be asked, Why did God love him? it must be answered, "Because he would love him[1]." If

[1] Deut. vii. 7, 8. and ix. 4, 5.

it be further asked, Who "hath wrought all his works in him?" it must be answered, God[m]. It is God who laid the foundation, and who carries on the spiritual building even to the end: and when the top-stone is brought forth, every sinner in the universe must "cry, Grace, grace unto it[n]."]

2. All presumption—

[The doctrine of predestination is objected to by many, under the idea that it authorizes and encourages persons to say, "I am elected, and have therefore no cause to fear, or even to take heed of my ways." But, if any man were so to abuse the doctrine, we would immediately ask him this question; Are you conformed to the image of Christ? Here is a test whereby to try our pretensions: and it will instantly discover of what value they are in the sight of God. If a man have an evidence in his own soul, that a work of grace has been begun within him, and that he has been enabled, in a considerable degree, to "put off the old man, and put on the new," then, in proportion as that change is manifest, he may infer from it his election of God: but, if that change do not appear in his life and conversation, then he may know infallibly, that, in speaking of himself as one whom God has predestinated unto life, he deceives his own soul, and gives advantage to his great adversary to destroy him. Let this then be well known, that we must try ourselves whether we be in the faith: and we must determine the matter, not by any groundless conceits of our own, but by our proficiency in righteousness and true holiness.]

3. All despondency—

[The doctrine of predestination, *if abused*, may generate both presumption and despondency: as our Church, in her 17th Article, has told us. But this does not militate against the doctrine itself; for on the same ground, we might decry every other doctrine of Christianity. Be it so: a man has not at present any evidence that he is one of God's elect: Does this warrant him to conclude that he is given over to a state of reprobation? Surely not: for, if he look into the Scriptures, he will find that even the Apostles themselves were once in a carnal unconverted state, yea, "were children of wrath, even as others[o]." But as the Apostles were in God's own time delivered from that state, so may we be, notwithstanding we are at this moment in a state which is most unpromising. God did not choose the Apostles for any good that was in them, or that he foresaw would be in them: and therefore he may magnify his grace towards us, even as he did towards them.

[m] Isai. xxvi. 12. 2 Cor. v. 5. [n] Zech. iv. 6—9. [o] Eph. ii. 3.

His grace is his own, and he may confer it on whomsoever he will: and it is a most consolatory thought, that, as he *may*, so he often *does*, cause his grace to abound where sin has most abounded. This we are sure is the doctrine of our Church; and we cannot do better than refer you to her Article upon this subject ——— Nevertheless, if any man be not able to receive this doctrine, we would on no account press it upon his mind: we would rather say to him, Discard it from your mind: and take the broad promises of Scripture, wherein it is declared, that "the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin," and that he "will save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him." Take, I say, these promises, not with any reference whatever to God's eternal counsels towards you personally, but with a perfect confidence that he will fulfil them to all who rely upon him; and that no sinner in the universe, who comes to him in his Son's name, shall ever be cast out.]

MDCCCLXXIX.

GOD'S GIFT OF HIS SON A GROUND FOR EXPECTING EVERY OTHER BLESSING.

Rom. viii. 32. *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

IF we contemplate the mysterious work of redemption, and the grace of God as displayed in it, we shall be filled with wonder and amazement[a]; and in the view of it we shall defy all the enemies of our salvation[b]: but if we contemplate the means by which redemption has been effected, even by the gift of God's only dear Son, our exultation will rise to the highest summit of confidence and triumph. We may then assure ourselves, as the Apostle does in the text, that God's past goodness to us is a just ground for expecting every other blessing at his hands.

In these words we notice,

I. What God has done for us—

The state of fallen man was desperate: no possible way was left whereby we might restore ourselves to

[a] ver. 30. [b] ver. 31.

God's favour. God, in compassion to us, "spared not his own Son[c]."

[Nothing less than the incarnation and death of the Son of God could remedy the miseries which mankind had brought upon themselves; yet, such was God's regard for our sinful race, that, rather than they should perish, he would not withhold his only Son.]

He even "delivered him up" to death—

[God sent not his Son merely to instruct us: he gave him to make atonement for our sins: he sent him to die even the accursed death of the cross.]

We "all" were the persons for whose sake God thus delivered him—

[All indeed are not alike benefited by this gift; but it was designed alike for all, and there is a sufficiency in the death of Christ to expiate the sins of all. If any receive not salvation through him, they owe it, not to any want of love and mercy in the bosom of Jehovah, (for he willeth not the death of any sinner,) nor to any want of merit in the Saviour, (for his blood can cleanse from all sin,) but altogether to their own obstinate unbelief. Every one, who desires acceptance through him, may confidently say, He was delivered up for *me*.]

This manifestation of Divine goodness affords abundant ground for,

II. The inference drawn from it—

God will "give us all things" that are needful—

[The general expression "all things" must be understood in a limited sense. God will not give worldly riches and honours to his people; but all things that are *good* for them he will bestow, whatever they need for body or soul, for time or eternity.]

He will give us all things "freely"—

[He does not need to have blessings extorted from him by importunity: he is far more willing to give than we are to ask; nor does he give *because* we ask, but stirs us up to ask, because he before determined to give: he will bestow every thing on his people as a father on his own children.]

This may be inferred from what he has already done—

[c] Οὐκ ἐφείσατο may either mean that he spared him not *in a way of justice*, i.e. that he exacted of him the utmost farthing of our debt (see 2 Pet. ii. 4.) or that he spared him not *in a way of bounty*, i.e. withheld him not. The latter seems to be the sense in this place.

[Will not he, who has given *his own Son*, give *smaller things?* Will he, who was so gracious to his *enemies*, forget his *friends?* Will he, who did so much *unsolicited*, refuse those who *cry day and night* unto him? This inference is so obvious, that the Apostle appeals to the reason of every man to judge of it. He insinuates that to doubt it would be the height of absurdity: he seems to think that God could not act otherwise.]

By way of IMPROVEMENT,

1. Let us endeavour to estimate aright this gift of God—

[God's own Son is infinitely above all creatures: all the hosts of angels and all the glory of heaven were nothing in comparison of him. Had he been a mere creature, the Apostle's inference had been inconclusive[d]. He, against whom the sword of vengeance was put forth, was Jehovah's fellow[e]. Let our gratitude rise in proportion to the excellency of this gift: let us contemplate its excellency, till we exclaim with the Apostle[f]—]

2. Let us avail ourselves of the encouragement given us to ask for more—

[We daily need many things both for our bodies and souls, and we have the fullest assurance that God will grant us what we need. Let not any one then say, "I am too unworthy to ask." What worthiness was there in man to obtain the gift of God's own Son? After HIM, can there be any thing too great for God to bestow? Surely then the weakest and the vilest may enlarge their petitions. If we "open our mouths wide, God will fill them."]

3. Let us be chiefly solicitous to receive Christ himself—

[God will bestow every thing "*with Christ:*" we cannot receive his blessings without HIM, nor him without his blessings. Let us then in every state labour most to secure our interest in Christ. If he be ours, we cannot but have every thing in, and with him[g].]

[d] If our Lord were only a creature, the reasoning would be to this effect:—'If God *delivered up* one creature *to* endure *temporal pain*, how shall he not *deliver* millions of creatures *from* enduring *eternal* misery? If he gave one creature, who was *infinitely below himself*, to be deprived of life for a time, how shall he not give *himself*, who is *infinitely above all creatures*, to be our everlasting portion?' What force or propriety would there be in such reasoning as this?

[e] Zech. xiii. 7. 1 Tim. iii. 16. [f] 2 Cor. ix. 15.

[g] 1 Cor. iii. 21—23.

MDCCCLXXX.

PAUL'S CONFIDENCE.

Rom. viii. 33, 34. *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*

OF all the systems that mankind have devised for reconciling themselves to God, there is not any that will afford solid confidence to the soul: they have never been able to fix a standard that should be a sufficient test of men's attainments, or to draw a line of distinction between those who should attain salvation, and those who should fall short of it. Hence, after all their labours, they are left in a painful uncertainty about their eternal state. But the Gospel removes all suspense on this subject; and gives to those who cordially embrace it, a full assurance of their acceptance with God. In the New Testament we find scarcely any intimation of believers being harassed with doubts and fears: but there are many instances wherein they express the most assured expectation of happiness and glory. In confirmation of this, we need look no further than to the words before us; wherein St. Paul speaks of them as having communion with Christ in his most exalted privileges, and as possessing the very same confidence as the Messiah himself enjoyed[a]: he, not in his own person only, but in the behalf of all God's people, challenges the whole universe to lay any thing to their charge, so as ultimately to condemn them.

We shall consider,

I. His confident challenge—

The name by which he characterizes God's people is most appropriate—

[Among the ungodly world, there is scarcely a more sarcastic or contemptuous expression ever used, than that by which God himself designates his own people. When they

[a] Compare Isai. l. 7—9. with the text.

say, "There is one of *the elect*," they mean by it, "There is a sanctimonious hypocrite, and a contemptible fanatic." But, whatever opprobrium they may attach to the word "*elect*," be it known, that there is an elect people, whom "God has chosen in Christ Jesus from before the foundation of the world[b]," and *that* too, irrespective of any works that they should afterwards perform[c]. He chose them because he would choose them, and loved them because he would love them[d]. And if any are disposed to quarrel with this exercise of sovereign grace, let them tell us, *who* made the distinction between the Jews and the rest of the world; and *why* he did so: let them also tell us, why he, who in that sovereign way chose nations, may not also choose individuals: and why he, who chose some to enjoy the means of salvation, may not choose others to salvation itself. Proud man may frame distinctions, if he pleases: but if the exercise of God's sovereignty be unjust in the one case, it must be unjust also in the other; and if it be admitted in the one case, it must be also in the other.

Ignorant men are ready to think, that this is a *proud* title: but it is the most humiliating title that can be imagined; because it acknowledges that no man on earth would ever have chosen God, if God had not first chosen him: and it is the rejection of this title, not the assumption of it, that argues pride; inasmuch as it implies, that some have within themselves an excellence, which has attracted the notice of Almighty God, and induced him to confer on them the most distinguished privileges.]

In behalf of these he expresses the most assured confidence of their salvation—

[No assertion, however strong, could so fully declare his confidence, as the challenge does which he gives to the whole universe.

We are not to understand him as saying, that there is *no ground* for accusing and condemning the elect; but, that they are brought into such a state that nothing ever shall be laid to their charge so as finally to effect their ruin.

Let us then, with him, give the challenge to all who may be supposed most likely to prevail against us; to *the law*, to *Satan*, to *conscience*, yea, with reverence be it spoken, even to *God himself*.

The *law* indeed may accuse us of having violated every commandment in ten thousand thousand instances: yet will we defy it to condemn us. *Satan* may affirm with truth, that we have been his vassals far the greater part of our lives: yet shall not he prevail against us. As for *conscience*, that will

[b] Eph. i. 4. [c] 2 Tim. i. 9. Rom. ix. 11. [d] Deut. vii. 6—8.

testify against us, that we have indulged many secret lusts, and been guilty of innumerable transgressions: yet shall not its allegations be heard to our confusion. It is needless to say what the omniscient *God* might lay to our charge, what rebellion against his Majesty, what neglect of his dear Son, what opposition to his Holy Spirit: but yet, notwithstanding all, *so* is the believer circumstanced, that God himself can find nothing for which to condemn him.

Doubtless these are strong assertions; and we may perhaps be ready to question the truth of them. But, if there were the smallest room for doubt, would the Apostle have been so confident in his challenge? Would he have repeated the challenge in such unqualified terms, if he could have been answered in so easy and obvious a manner as some imagine?]

Arrogant as the Apostle may appear, we shall cease to think him so, if we consider,

II. The grounds of his confidence—

His answers might be read, like the questions themselves, in the form of interrogatories; and they would derive much additional spirit and force from this construction, which indeed both the preceding and following context seem to countenance. But in whatever way his words are pointed, the import of them is much the same. He grounds his confidence on,

1. The sovereignty of the Father's grace—

[The elect, having believed in Jesus, are actually brought into a justified state. Now justification implies a *free*, a *full*, an *everlasting* remission of all our sins. It is a free gift bestowed upon us, not as saints, but as sinners: we are not first made godly, and then justified; but are first justified, and then made godly. St. Paul expressly gives this title to God, "The justifier of the ungodly[e]." When God of his infinite mercy vouchsafes to justify a sinner, he does not put away some sins, and retain others; but "blots them all out as a morning cloud[f]," and "puts them from us as far as the east is from the west[g]." It is a blessed and a certain truth, that "all who believe are justified from *all* things[h]." Nor does God cancel our debt for a time only, intending to call us to account for it at a future period: for he covenants with us, that "our sins and iniquities he will remember no more[i];" and he assures us, that "his gifts and calling are without repentance[k]."

Now if God thus justify his elect, we may well ask, "who

[e] Rom. iv. 5. [f] Isai. xliv. 22. [g] Ps. ciii. 12.
[h] Acts xiii. 39. [i] Heb. x. 17. [k] Rom. xi. 29.

shall condemn them?" If he "cast all our sins into the very depths of the sea[l]," who shall bring them up again from thence, and lay them to our charge? He "beholdeth not iniquity in Jacob[m]," but views us as "complete in Christ[n]:" and has formed a chain that shall not be broken: "whom from eternity he foreknew and predestinated, them, in his appointed time, he called and justified; and them he will also glorify" for evermore[o].]

2. The perfection of the Redeemer's work—

[Every part of Christ's work was considered by the Apostle as a security for the salvation of God's elect. His *death*, his *resurrection*, his *ascension*, his *intercession* are so many pledges, that no one shall ever trust in him in vain.

For what end was it that Christ *died*, but to procure "eternal redemption" for his people[p]? "He gave his own life to be a ransom for them[q];" "he shed his blood for the remission of their sins[r]:" "he died that they might live no longer to themselves, but unto him that died for them[s]." We confess, that, if we look only at their steadfastness, they may come into condemnation; and "the weak brother for whom Christ died, and that has been actually washed in his blood, may perish[t]:" but their security is in Christ; who will not readily forego the ends of his death, or give up to Satan the souls which he has purchased at so dear a rate.

The *resurrection* of Christ is a great additional security to the believer; because it was a liberating of our surety from the prison to which he had been carried on our account; and consequently it argues the full discharge of that debt which he had taken upon himself. Hence a *peculiar stress* is laid upon it in the text; as also in another place, where it is said, "If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, *much more*, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life[u]." Now if he "died for our offences, and rose again *for our justification*[x]," will he suffer this end to be defeated? We may be well assured he will not.

From the *ascension* of Christ a yet fuller assurance may be derived, because he is gone to "the right hand of God" both as our forerunner and our head. He is not only "preparing places for his people," but is invested with all power in heaven and in earth, and has the government of the whole universe committed to him, on purpose that he may put down all his,

[l] Mic. vii. 19. [m] Num. xxiii. 21. [n] Col. ii. 10.
[o] Rom. viii. 30. [p] Heb. ix. 12. [q] Matt. xx. 28.
[r] Matt. xxvi. 28. [s] 2 Cor. v. 15.
[t] Rom. xiv. 15. and 1 Cor. viii. 11. [u] Rom. v. 10.
[x] Rom. iv. 25.

and his people's, enemies[y]. If then he kept his people when he was on earth, so that not one of them was lost[z], will he now suffer any to pluck them out of his hand? No: he has said, that "they shall never perish[a]:" and he will assuredly fulfil his word.

If any thing further be requisite for the comfort of our minds, we find it abundantly supplied in the *intercession* of Christ. The only doubt that can arise on this subject is, whether our manifold backslidings will not provoke the Father to cast us off? But "Christ ever liveth to make intercession for us," and thereby preserves that peace, which otherwise would be interrupted every hour. If indeed our transgressions were wilful and habitual, we should prove ourselves at once not to be of the number of God's elect. But if they be only such as arise from the infirmity of our nature; if they be lamented, resisted, and diminished; and if they make us to cleave more earnestly to Christ, Christ will be "our Advocate with the Father[b]," and will prevail so as to "save us to the uttermost[c]."

From all these grounds we may affirm with the fullest assurance, that "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus[d]."]

To IMPROVE this subject, let us stir up ourselves,

1. To humble inquiry—

[Are *we* of the number of "God's elect?" This is no difficult point to ascertain: for though we cannot look into the book of God's decrees, to see whether *God* have chosen *us*, we may search the records of our own conscience, to see whether *we* have chosen *God:* and this will determine the point at once. If we have chosen God as our portion, and Christ as our way to the Father, it is an indisputable evidence that God had before chosen us; because we never should have loved him, if he had not first loved us. But if we feel no such delight in God, we have no reason to think that we belong to him. Let this mode of inquiry be instituted; and let it be pursued with the seriousness which it deserves.]

2. To grateful adoration—

[What debtors are we to the grace of God, that grace that chose us, that grace that treasured up a fulness for us in Christ Jesus! What do we owe to him, who, when he had passed by angels, was pleased to choose us; and when he might justly have driven us *beyond the hope of mercy*, has placed us *beyond the fear of condemnation!* Surely, if we pour not out our hearts in

[y] 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25. [z] John xvii. 12. [a] John x. 28.
[b] 1 John ii. 1. [c] Heb. vii. 25. [d] Rom. viii. 1.

devoutest gratitude before him, the very stones may well cry out against us.

But while we render to him the tribute of a thankful heart, let us also glorify him by a holy life. It is "*to good works* that we are chosen[e]," and "to salvation *through sanctification of the Spirit*[f]," and therefore we must *answer the end of* our election, if we would finally enjoy its blessings. Let us then walk worthy of our high calling, and cultivate all the dispositions of God's elect; and be as studious to avoid all grounds of accusation, as to escape the miseries of condemnation itself.]

[e] Eph. ii. 10. Tit. ii. 14. [f] 2 Thess. ii. 13.

MDCCCLXXXI.

PAUL'S ASSURANCE OF PERSEVERING.

Rom. viii. 38, 39. *I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

AS there is a typical resemblance between that good land which was promised to the Jews, and that better country which is reserved for us in heaven, so is there a striking resemblance between those, whether Jews or Christians, who have looked forward to the accomplishment of the promises. We see Moses while he was yet on the other side of Jordan, and Joshua soon after he had arrived on the borders of Canaan, appointing the boundaries of the twelve tribes, settling every thing with respect to the distribution of the land, and ordering various things to be observed, just as if they were already in full possession of the whole country without one enemy to oppose them. This appears at first sight presumptuous; but they knew that God had given them the land; and therefore, notwithstanding the battles which were yet to be fought, they doubted not in the least but that they should obtain the promised inheritance. Thus also the Apostle, in the passage before us, speaks in the language of triumph on behalf of himself and of all

the Christians at Rome, and *that* too even while they were surrounded with enemies, and conflicting on the field of battle.

It will be profitable to consider,

I. The point of which the Apostle was persuaded—

["The love of God" is that which God has manifested to us "in Christ Jesus," not merely in sending his Son to die for us, but in forgiving our sins, and adopting us into his family for his sake.

From this love the Apostle says, Nothing shall ever separate us: and, to strengthen his assertion, he calls to mind the various things which might be supposed capable of effecting a separation; and declares concerning each, that it never shall.

He mentions four distinct couplets. First, "neither death nor life" shall be able. Death is that which is most of all dreaded[a], and life is that which is most of all desired[b]: more especially, if the one be attended with bitter agonies, or the other with all the pleasures of sense, their influence over us is exceeding great. But neither the one with all its terrors, nor the other with all its comforts, shall ever dissolve the union that subsists between God and his believing people.

Next, "neither angels, nor principalities, nor powers" shall be able. By angels must certainly be meant the evil angels, since the good angels are employed in ministering to the heirs of salvation, and would rather confirm them in the love of God than separate them from it: whereas, the evil angels, like a roaring lion, are constantly seeking whom they may devour. "Principalities and powers" are civil magistrates, who hold dominion over the visible, as the devils do over the invisible, world: and who, alas! too often unite their influence with that of Satan to destroy the Church. But neither the one nor the other, nor both combined, shall ever separate a believer, how weak soever he may be, from the love of God.

Moreover "things present or things to come" will be found alike impotent in this respect. Present things may be so embarrassing as greatly to perplex us; and things future may appear so formidable as to make us think it almost impossible for us to maintain our ground against them; but they shall never prevail to destroy a child of God.

Lastly, "neither height nor depth" shall be able. To some the height of earthly prosperity is a dreadful snare; to others the depth of adversity and distress. But the believer may defy them both: for not only *they* shall not be able, but

[a] Heb. ii. 15. [b] Satan for once spake truth, Job ii. 4.

"nothing in the whole creation" shall be able, to separate him from the love of God.]

This confidence of the Apostle being so extraordinary, let us consider,

II. The grounds of his persuasion—

These were twofold; *general*, as relating to others; and *particular*, as relating to himself; the former creating in him an assurance of faith; the latter an assurance of hope. We notice,

1. The general grounds—

[These are such as are revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and are common to all believers.

The stability of the covenant, which God has made with us in Christ Jesus, warrants an assurance, that all who are interested in it shall endure to the end. It secures to us not only a new heart, but a divine agency, "causing us to walk in God's statutes[c]." It engages that God shall never depart from us, nor we from him[d]. In short, it promises us "grace and glory[e]." Now this covenant shall not be broken: if heaven and earth fail, *this* shall not[f]: there shall not be one jot or tittle of it ever violated: it is "ordered in all things, and sure[g]." Consequently the believer shall never be deprived of any of its blessings.

The immutability of God is another ground of assured faith and hope. Wherefore did God originally set his love upon us? Was it for our own goodness, either seen or foreseen? Alas! we had no *existence* but in God's purpose: and, from the moment we began to exist, we have never had one good thing in us which we did not first receive from God[h]. If then God loved us simply because he would love us[i], and not for any inherent loveliness in us, will he cast us off again on account of those evil qualities which he well knew to be in us, and which he himself has undertaken to subdue? This would argue a change in his counsels: whereas we are told that, "with him there is no variableness neither shadow of turning[k];" and that "his gifts and calling are without repentance[l]."

The offices of Christ may also be considered as justifying an assured hope of final perseverance. For our Lord did not assume the priestly, prophetic, and kingly offices merely to put us into a capacity to save ourselves; but that his work

[c] Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. [d] Jer. xxxii. 40. [e] Ps. lxxxiv. 11.
[f] Isai. liv. 10. [g] 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. [h] 1 Cor. iv. 7.
[i] Deut. vii. 7, 8. [k] Jam. i. 17. [l] Rom. xi. 29.

might be effectual for the salvation of all whom the Father had given to him: and at the last day he will be able to say, as he did in the days of his flesh, "Of those whom thou hast given me I have lost none." If he is ever living on purpose to make intercession for them, and is constituted Head over all things to the Church on purpose to save them, then he will keep them; none shall ever pluck them out of his hands[m], nor shall any thing ever separate them from the love of God.]

2. The particular grounds—

[We need not resort to any express revelation made to Paul, in order to account for his confidence: for he could not but know that he had believed in Christ, and that he was as desirous of being sanctified by his grace as of being saved by his blood; and consequently, he could not doubt his interest in the promises. And wherever conscience testifies that this is the real experience of the soul, there a person may entertain the same assured hope as Paul himself did.

It would not indeed be expedient for *young converts* to indulge too strong a confidence; because their sincerity has been but little tried, and they are by no means sufficiently simple in their dependence on God: in proportion therefore as the evidences of their faith are defective, and the means of stability are overlooked, they must relax their confidence of persevering to the end. As for *those* who are already *in a backslidden state*, it would be a most horrible delusion in them to say, that nothing should separate them from the love of God; since they have reason to doubt at this moment whether they be at all interested in his love.

But a humble contrite person, that is living by faith on the Son of God, and maintaining a suitable conversation in all his spirit and conduct, *he* may conclude himself to be in the love of God, and be persuaded firmly that nothing shall be able to separate him from it. He then stands in the very situation of the Apostle, as far as respects his own personal experience, and therefore may indulge the same joyful hope and persuasion that he shall endure unto the end. Nor need he be at all discouraged on account of his own weakness, since the more weak he feels himself to be, the stronger he is in reality[n], inasmuch as he is made more dependent on his God.

In a word, an assurance of *faith* respecting the accomplishment of God's promises to believers, should be maintained by all, since his word can never fail: but an assurance of *hope* respecting our own personal interest in those promises, should rise or fall according to the evidences we have of our own sincerity.]

[m] 1 Sam. ii. 9. 1 Pet. i. 5. John x. 28. [n] 2 Cor. xii. 10.

ADDRESS—

1. Those who know nothing of this joyful persuasion—

[Do not condemn that of which you are not capable of judging aright: but seek an interest in the love of God; and believe in Christ, through whom the Father's love shall be secured, and by whom it shall be revealed to your soul. When "the love of God has been shed abroad in your own hearts," you will be better able to judge of the confidence which that love inspires.]

2. Those whose persuasion accords with that of the Apostle—

[Nothing surely can be conceived more delightful than to possess an assured hope of eternal happiness and glory. But let it never be abused to the encouragement of sloth. If we profess that nothing *shall* separate us from the love of God, let us take care that nothing *does* separate us from it. Let not the temptations of Satan, or the persecutions of men, not the comforts of life, or the terrors of death, let nothing felt at present, or feared in future, let nothing in the whole creation draw us aside from the path of duty, or retard our progress in the divine life°.]

° Jude, ver. 20, 21.

MDCCCLXXXII.

THE PRIVILEGES OF JEWS AND CHRISTIANS.

Rom. ix. 1—4. *I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises.*

IT is generally thought an office of love to conceal from persons any truths, the recital of which will afford them pain: but true love will rather stimulate us to declare such truths as are necessary to be known, though it will incline us to declare them with the greatest tenderness and circumspection. An admirable pattern presents itself before us in the text.

The Apostle was about to enter on a subject most offensive to the Jews, but a subject that ought in no wise to be concealed from them, namely, the determination of God to cast off their nation, and to engraft the Gentiles on their stock. But, as it would be thought that he was actuated only by a spirit of revenge, he declares to them, in the most solemn manner, and appeals to God for the truth of it, that so far from wishing their hurt, he was affected with the deepest sorrow on their account; and that there was nothing he would not do or suffer, if it might but be the means of saving them from the impending ruin.

His enumeration of the privileges which they abused, and his pathetic lamentation over them, may well lead us to consider,

I. The exalted privileges enjoyed by true Israelites—

The Jews, as a nation, were favoured beyond all the nations upon earth—

[God honoured them with *an adoption into his family*, he regarded them as his children[a], and acted towards them as a father[b]. He vouchsafed to them *a symbol of his presence:* the ark, and the shechinah, or bright cloud, upon it, were visible tokens of his presence, and were regarded as the "principal glory" of that distinguished people[c]. He "gave" them also from heaven *a revelation of his will:* "the" *moral* "law" he promulged in the form of "a covenant," and wrote with his own finger on two tables of stone[d]; the *judicial* law he formed as a code, according to which he himself, and all the magistrates under him, were to govern them; and the *ceremonial* law he instituted for "the service" of his temple, that they might worship him in a becoming manner[e]. To all these he added "*a promise*" *of his rest*, and a continued enjoyment of it, unless they should provoke him by their iniquities to deprive them of it[f].]

[a] Exod. iv. 22, 23. Jer. xxxi. 9, 10.

[b] Deut. xxxii. 6, 10, 13, 14. [c] 1 Sam. iv. 21, 22. Ps. lxxx. 1.

[d] The covenant was but *one:* but it is spoken of in the plural number, either because it was given on two tables, or because it was repeatedly published in different forms.

[e] Because the sacred oracles were so great a blessing, (Deut. iv. 7, 8. Rom. iii. 1, 2.) the Apostle speaks of them in three different views.

[f] Deut. xxx. 15—20.

But their privileges were only a shadow of those enjoyed by true Israelites—

[As, under the Jewish dispensation, "all were not Israel who where of Israel[g]," so, under the Gospel, "they, who are Christ's, are the true seed of Abraham, and heirs according to the promise[h]." Now to those who are "Israelites indeed" belong those infinitely rich blessings, which, *in a figure*, were enjoyed by the carnal Jews. They are really the sons of God, as soon as ever they believe in Christ[i], and have a spirit of "adoption" given them whereby they cry, Abba, Father[k]. They have God, not merely residing in a bright cloud, but dwelling in their own hearts[l], and displaying to them his "glory" in the face of Jesus[m]. To them is revealed that "covenant," which is "ordered in all things and sure[n]," together with the whole of their duty both to God and man; so that, by adhering to his directions, they are sure to prove both duteous citizens, and accepted worshippers. Lastly, they have also exceeding great and precious "promises," comprehending every thing that is good for body and for soul, in time and in eternity[o].]

But, by how much the more exalted our condition under the Gospel is, by so much the more may we see,

II. The disposition we should manifest towards those who despise these privileges—

The expressions used by the Apostle admit of different interpretations[p]. But, in whatever sense they be taken, they certainly import that,

[g] Rom. ix. 6. [h] Gal. iii. 29.
[i] John i. 12. 1 John iii. 1, 2. Eph. ii. 19. [k] Rom. viii. 14, 15.
[l] 1 Cor. iii. 16. [m] 2 Cor. iv. 6. [n] 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.
[o] 1 Tim. iv. 8.

[p] Some consider him as saying that he was willing to be excommunicated from the church of God, and to be treated by them, even as he was by his enemies: and others, as saying, that he was willing to suffer for them ἀπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, *after the example* of Christ. But if we take ηὐχόμην in the past tense, instead of obliging the Apostle to say, εὐχοίμην ἄν, and if we comprehend the words ηὐχόμην γὰρ αὐτὸς ἐγὼ ἀνάθεμα εἶναι ἀπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ in a parenthesis, the sense will be far more clear, and all the difficulties that occur on the other construction will be avoided. The sense will then be, I am sorry (for I myself was once in their very condition, and wished to have nothing to do with Christ, which, in fact, was to be accursed from Christ, as much as any of them now do) for my brethren, &c. Compare Gal. iv. 12. in the Greek, "Be ye as I am, for I *was* as ye are." The same idea is more fully expressed Acts xxvi. 9—11. According to

1. We should be deeply concerned about their state—

[There were various things which grieved and wounded the Apostle's mind, yea, that occasioned him *great* heaviness, and *continual* pangs, like those of a woman in her travail[q]: he was much affected, not only with the numbers of those that were rejecting his message, but with the peculiar advantages they had for knowing the truth, the strong obligations which their very profession, as God's Israel, laid them under to receive it, and the aggravated guilt under which they must speedily and eternally perish. All these reasons are incomparably stronger as applied to those, who while they call themselves Christians, are unmindful of the privileges they enjoy. Who can think of the many thousands that bear the Christian name, who yet never draw nigh to God with filial affection, never behold the light of his countenance, never lay hold on his covenant of grace, never stay themselves in truth upon his promised mercy; who, I say, can think of these, and not wish that his "head were a fountain of tears to run down for them night and day[r]?" If one soul be of such value, that the whole world can never compensate for the loss of it, how shocking is the thought of millions of souls perishing under such an accumulated load of guilt! Surely no heaviness can be too great, no anguish too abiding, when we are surrounded with such objects, objects despising their own mercies, and "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath."]

2. We should account nothing too much to do or suffer for their salvation—

[When God threatened to destroy the whole Jewish nation, and offered to raise up from Moses a nation in their stead, Moses begged, that he himself might be blotted out of the list of God's visible church, rather than that tremendous threa-

this interpretation, the Apostle's words are a plain and obvious *reason for his excessive grief:* for, having been in their situation, and knowing from bitter experience the evil of it, he could never think of them without the keenest sensations of sorrow and compassion. If the strength of the expression, "I wished myself *accursed from Christ*," appear to militate against this interpretation, we observe, that the Apostle puts the effect for the cause, that is, the ultimate effect of his aversion to Christ for the aversion itself. A similar mode of expression repeatedly occurs in Scripture. See Isai. xxviii. 15. and xxx. 10. See also Acts xiii. 46. and Rev. ii. 24. where the depths of *Satan* import what those *depths* were in reality, and not what the people themselves called them.

[q] Ὠδίνη, compare Gal. iv. 19. [r] Jer. ix. 1.

tening should be executed[s]. And certainly the Apostle Paul, whose labours and sufferings for the good of his fellow-creatures were unparalleled[t], would gladly have submitted to any temporal calamity, if it might but operate for the salvation of Israel. And who, that considers what Jesus has done for the salvation of men, does not see the reasonableness of such a disposition? Who does not condemn himself for his want of love to his fellow-immortals, and his want of zeal in their service? If we condemn the world for their supineness, methinks the people of God have yet more occasion to blush for their own: for, what the world do, they do ignorantly; but they, who are taught of God, can see the state of those around them, and yet too often look upon them, either with cold indifference, or inactive pity. But let every Christian cultivate a better spirit; nor ever be satisfied, till he can appeal to God, and say, "I would endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory[u]."]

INFER—

1. How far are they from a Christian spirit, who not only use no means for the salvation of others, but oppose and thwart them that do!

[If a faithful servant of God exert himself for the good of mankind, how many will cry out against him as officious and fanatical, ostentatious and uncharitable! Who, among the Prophets, or Apostles, or who, even in the present day, has ever shewn, in the smallest degree, the disposition manifested in the text, without exposing himself to much calumny and contempt? But let the opposers of vital godliness and holy zeal, compare themselves with the Apostle, and ask, whether they breathe any thing of his spirit? And let them no longer persist in fighting against God, and destroying their fellow-creatures; but rather turn unto God, that they themselves may be partakers of his proffered mercy.]

2. How earnest should every Christian be in seeking *his own* salvation!

[If we ought to be deeply concerned about the souls of others, and to be willing either to do or suffer any thing, in order to promote their welfare, how much more should we lay to heart our own state, and exercise self-denial for the good of our own souls! If we duly estimated the privileges which God has given us, if we considered the happiness to which an improvement of those privileges would lead, and the misery that will

[s] Exod. xxxii. 32. [t] 2 Cor. xi. 23—27. [u] 2 Tim. ii. 10

infallibly result from the neglect of them, we should engage with incomparably greater zeal in the work of our salvation; we should make it our meat and drink to do God's will; nor would life with all its joys, or death with all its terrors, be suffered to divert us from the prosecution of our purpose.]

MDCCCLXXXIII.

OUR DUTY TOWARDS THE JEWS.

Rom. ix. 1—5. *I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.*

FIDELITY in ministers is absolutely indispensable. Without it we cannot approve ourselves either to God or man. Yet in the exercise of it we should maintain a tenderness of spirit, "speaking the truth" indeed, but speaking it "in love." When at any time, as frequently we must, we bring painful truths to the ears of our hearers, we should convince them, that we are not actuated by any thing but a spirit of love. St. Paul was especially careful upon this head; as may be seen in all his epistles, but especially in this which is before us[a]. He is constrained to declare to the Jews, God's determination to reject the Jews from being his people, and to admit the Gentiles in their stead to those privileges which the Jews had hitherto exclusively enjoyed. But, as this was a topic which must of necessity be most painful to their feelings, he labours to convince them, that, in all which he should declare respecting it, he was actuated only by a sense of duty, and not by any unkind feelings towards them; and that, so far from wishing them

[a] See in Paley's "Horæ Paulinæ" what he says on the Epistle to the Romans. It is pre-eminently deserving the attention of ministers.

this evil, he would submit to any thing to deliver them from it. He calls God to witness, that he had nothing more sincerely at heart, than that, as they had already possessed, so they should ever continue to possess, the most distinguished tokens of God's love and favour.

In the words which we have just read, we may see,

I. The distinguished privileges of the Jewish people—

In setting these forth, the Apostle addresses them, not as strangers, but as "his brethren, his kinsmen, according to the flesh;" and then records the distinctions that had been conferred upon them; specifying both those which had been bestowed *for their own personal benefit*, and those which had been conferred *for the benefit of the whole world.*

[They were "Israelites," descended from Jacob, who, in remembrance of his wrestling with the angel, and prevailing with God in prayer, was honoured with the name of Israel. "To them pertained the adoption," they, as a nation, being regarded as "God's first-born." To them had been vouchsafed "the glory," even that bright cloud, which was the symbol of the Deity; which guided their forefathers through the wilderness, and afterwards abode both in the tabernacle and the temple, resting upon the ark, and residing between the cherubims, till the temple itself was destroyed by the Chaldean army. Theirs also were "the covenants;" both the covenant of grace, which was given to Abraham, and the national covenant, which was made with them in the time of Moses. To them had God also "given the law," proclaiming it with an audible voice from Mount Sinai, and delivering it to them written with his own finger upon tables of stone. To them also was vouchsafed the ceremonial law, comprehending every minute particular respecting "the service of God;" so that in no case whatever were they left in doubt how they should approach him with acceptance. The promises also were theirs, both those which related to the sending of the Messiah, and those which related to the possession of Canaan. "Theirs too were the fathers," Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, than whom none of the children of men had ever been more highly favoured with divine and heavenly communications. But to these benefits, which may be considered as *personal*, we must add that which infinitely exceeds them all, and in which the whole world are interested, namely, that "of them, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for

ever." Yes, when the ever-blessed, the co-equal, the co-eternal Son of God came into the world, that by his own obedience unto death, he might accomplish the redemption of sinful man, he assumed his human nature from them, even from a Jewish Virgin; so that, in a more strict and appropriate sense than any other person, a Jew may say of him, He is bone of *my* bone, and flesh of *my* flesh.

Consider now how glorious these distinctions were. To what other nation was any one of them ever vouchsafed? or what has the greatest monarch upon earth that can be in any degree compared with them? The honours which come of man are lighter than vanity itself, when compared with those which come of God: and when weighed in this scale, the highest monarchs in the universe are not so elevated above a slave, as the meanest Jew is exalted above them. But what shall we say to the giving birth to the Messiah, who was "the mighty God," "Emmanuel, God with us?" Here all words fail us: in vain does the imagination attempt to grasp so wonderful an event. "God manifest in the flesh!" How "great this mystery of godliness!" and how infinitely ennobled are that people, to whom the ever-blessed God is so nearly related!]

The more we contemplate the privileges of the Jewish people, the more we see,

II. The deep concern which we should feel for them—

The Apostle declares his compassion for them in the strongest terms; in considering which, it will be proper to notice,

1. What is implied in them—

[It is plain that St. Paul did not approve of that spurious charity which is so prevalent in our day. We cannot endure to think that any should finally be left to perish. We regard it as the summit of uncharitableness, to suppose that Jews and Gentiles are all in a state of guilt and condemnation, and that they can be saved only by their conversion to the faith of Christ. But let any one refer to our text, and he will see at once what St. Paul's opinion was on this most interesting subject. If the Jews in their unconverted state were safe, why was St. Paul so grieved on their account? Would he have felt such "great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart" for them, or made such solemn appeals to God respecting his anxiety for them, if they had been in a state of favour and acceptance with God? There cannot possibly be a doubt on this subject: he regarded them all as perishing in their sins, according to that declaration of our blessed Lord, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall

die in your sins[b]." Let this then be borne in mind in reference to that unhappy people, yes, and in reference to ourselves also, if we be not truly and unfeignedly devoted to God, as a penitent, believing, and obedient people — — —]

2. What is expressed—

[The terms, especially those in the third verse of our text, are so strong, that commentators have been at a loss to explain them, so as to render them consistent with what may reasonably be supposed to have been the actual experience of St. Paul. As for his wishing himself eternally banished from God for his brethren's sake, it could not be: though he might, like Moses, be contented to be blotted out from the list of God's people *here in this world*[c], or even to be treated as accursed *after the example* of Christ, for his brethren's sake. But we need not have recourse to either of these interpretations; for by only putting a part of the Apostle's words into a parenthesis, the sense will be perfectly simple. He once was as full of enmity against Christ, and determined to have no connexion with him, as any of his brethren: and he knew that, *in effect*, this was to "wish himself accursed from Christ[d]." He tells them therefore, that, having been in the same perilous circumstances with themselves, he felt the more deeply for them. Thus by putting into a parenthesis those words, "I once wished myself accursed from Christ," the sense will exactly accord with what the Apostle says in his Epistle to the Galatians, "Be ye as I am: for I was as ye are[e]."

But though by this explanation of the text we get rid of that from whence it seems to derive its greatest force, enough remains in it to serve as an example to the whole world. St. Paul knowing that his brethren, whilst they continued in unbelief, were perishing in their sins, "had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart on their account," and regarded nothing too much to do or suffer, if by any means he might be instrumental to their salvation. This is what every Christian should feel; and it is a shame to the whole Christian world that so little of it is felt amongst us. How few can truly join in the solemn appeal which is here made to the heart-searching God! Instead of an appeal to God respecting the greatness and continuance of our sorrow on behalf of the Jewish nation, does not conscience rather call for a confession, that we have had no more heaviness or sorrow of heart for them, than if they had been

[b] John viii. 24. [c] Exod. xxxii. 32.

[d] See Isai. xxviii. 15. where *the effect is put for the cause* precisely in a similar way.

[e] Gal. iv. 12. For a fuller explanation of the text, see the preceding Discourse.

in a state of perfect safety? Alas! when have we spent one single hour in prayer for them? What sacrifices have we made, or what exertions, for the enlightening of their minds, and the saving of their souls? If we should say, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved," would not our daily experience give the lie to our profession? Surely we have need to blush and be ashamed, every one of us. Had we seen a vessel wrecked, and all the crew perishing in the ocean, there is not one amongst us so inhuman, but he would be filled with the tenderest concern for them, and exert himself to the uttermost, if by any means he might save some of them. But we have seen millions of God's ancient people perishing for ever, and have had the means of saving them within our own reach, and yet have made no efforts for their welfare, nor felt a pang on account of their destruction. O brethren! let it not be thus with us any longer: but let us cultivate the spirit of the Apostle, and labour henceforth as he did, for the restoration and salvation of our Jewish brethren.

It will be in vain, however, to urge you to exertions for others, if you begin not with your own souls. Here is, in reality, the root of all our neglect of others: we are not truly and thoroughly concerned even about ourselves. Alas! if we were to make, respecting our own souls, the appeal to God which the Apostle made respecting his Jewish brethren, how few could utter it in truth! Let us try it one moment: "O my God, I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart" *on account of my own sins;* I feel them as a heavy burthen, too heavy for me to bear; and I find no rest in my soul, but by coming weary and heavy-laden to my Lord and Saviour. Beloved brethren, is this true of you? can you say it and "not lie?" Does your conscience attest the truth of it? and does the Holy Ghost, the heart-searching God, bear witness to it? What a fearful state must *you* then be in, if, with your superior advantages, you are yet impenitent and unbelieving, like the Jews themselves? Surely there is need that your brethren in Christ, who once were in your perilous condition, but have been converted by the grace of God, should weep and mourn over you, even as the Apostle did over the unbelieving Jews.

Will you say, that there is no occasion for you to fear, since in your baptism you were made "members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven?" True, you have by baptism all that the Jews derived from circumcision[f]

[f] See the Church Catechism, which with great propriety represents *us* as enjoying *by baptism* all the privileges which the Jews enjoyed *by circumcision*. But notwithstanding those privileges, we must

——— But this is the very reason why you should weep the more for your sins; because, when you already possess such glorious advantages, even as the Jews did by circumcision, you should lose them all, instead of securing the everlasting possession of them through the exercise of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle acknowledges the exalted privileges of the Jews, "to whom pertained the adoption" into God's family: but he had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart for them notwithstanding, because their guilt was the greater, and their condemnation would be the heavier on account of their impenitence and unbelief. And so, whilst *you* are exalted to heaven, even like Bethsaida and Capernaum, in the privileges you enjoy, there is reason to fear that you will be cast the deeper into hell for your misimprovement of them, and that in the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, yea, and for Sodom and Gomorrha, than for you.

Begin then, all of you, with your own souls; and then extend your concern to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And think not that your labours for *them* will be in vain; for the same power which can convert and save *you*, is able to effect the same blessed work for *them*. Less than omnipotence will not suffice for *you:* and to omnipotence all things are alike easy. See what God did for the Jews in the first ages ——— See what he did for the benighted Gentiles, who were quite as far from God as the Jews at this hour can be ——— Think of our forefathers once bowing down to stocks and stones, and see what Britain now is ——— Or, if you are yourselves renewed by divine grace, see what wonders have been wrought for *you* ——— At all events, do what you can to serve your God, and to benefit your fellow-creatures, fully confiding in that gracious declaration, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy[g]."]

perish for ever, if we believe not in the Lord Jesus Christ. The external title to those blessings we obtain as soon as by baptism we are admitted into covenant with God: but the actual enjoyment of them we can obtain only by the exercise of faith in Christ.

[g] This subject being important in reference to the Jews, a short and easy mode of treating it is here subjoined:—

I. The distinguished, &c.—1. Those which were vouchsafed to them for their own personal benefit. 2. Those which were conferred on them for the benefit of the whole world: (God assuming *their* flesh into union with himself.)

II. The deep, &c.—1. What is implied. 2. What is expressed: (We should be able to make a similar appeal.)

INQUIRE—1. What have we felt for our own souls?—(We possess by baptism what they enjoyed by circumcision; yet are we, like them,

in a perishing condition, till we believe in Christ. Till we believe in Christ, "*we are accursed from Christ*," and can be saved only through faith in our *incarnate* God.)

2. What have we felt in reference to our Jewish brethren?—(We should feel as the Apostle did. But, could we adopt his *appeal*, and "not lie?" Have we not rather been disposed to deride strong feelings and great exertions in others, than to weep over them, and labour for them ourselves? Rest not till you can make St. Paul's appeal your own.)

MDCCCLXXXIV.

ISRAEL IN THE MIDST OF ISRAEL.

Rom. ix. 6. *They are not all Israel who are of Israel.*

EVIL as have been the dispositions of those who have set themselves against the doctrines of the Gospel, we have been greatly indebted to them: since they have called forth statements which we should never otherwise have received; and have drawn from the Apostles of our Lord a disclosure of their inward motives and principles, which nothing but an absolute necessity for the vindication of their own character could ever have elicited. The epistle before us is full of objections, started against every doctrine which the writer of it maintained. In the former part of the third chapter the objections are urged with a pertinacity and boldness, which compelled the Apostle to say respecting the persons who so urged them, that "their damnation was just[a]." In the sixth and seventh chapters, the objections against both the Law and the Gospel gave rise to an elucidation of them, so clear, that there can be no doubt entertained respecting their proper use, or their transcendent excellence. In the chapter which we are about to consider, the Apostle begins with expressing his deep and continual sorrow on account of the judgments impending over the Jews for their obstinate rejection of their Messiah. He then anticipates an objection which would be brought against him; namely, that if, as he had supposed, the Jews

[a] Rom. iii. 8.

were to be cast off, the word of God, which had promised all manner of blessings to Abraham and his seed, would be made void. But to this he replies, that the promises were made to Abraham and his *spiritual* seed: and that all others, however they might be descended from him *after the flesh*, would assuredly be cast off, since "all were not Israel, who were of Israel;" neither, because they were the natural seed of Abraham, were they necessarily to be numbered amongst the children to whom the promises were made[b].

Now, in considering this reply, I shall notice,

I. The affirmation itself—

It is here supposed that the whole nation of Israel possessed the same advantages, and, in appearance, enjoyed the same blessings. Yet the Apostle distinguishes between some of them and others; and affirms, that some had claims and privileges, to which the others were not entitled. This was true respecting them: and it is true at this time, also, in relation to ourselves. For, as then, so now also,

1. All are not objects of the same electing love—

[It is undeniable, that God chose Abraham out of an idolatrous world, and gave to him a promise of blessings which were withheld from others of the human race, and which had never been merited by him. To his seed also were these blessings promised; but not to Ishmael, who was then alive: no; they were entailed on a son who should afterwards be born, and should be born too after that neither the father nor the mother could, by reason of their advanced age, expect any progeny. Here, then, was the same sovereignty manifested as in the selection of Abraham himself. In the children of Israel, too, was the same sovereignty displayed: for, even whilst the twins were in their mother's womb, God's determination respecting them was made known; and it was appointed that the blessings of the covenant should descend to the younger in preference to the elder: as it is written, "The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, *that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth*, it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger[c]." In this, the intention of God to display

[b] ver. 6, 7. [c] ver. 11, 12.

his sovereignty in the disposal of his blessings is expressly asserted, as the end for which he made the appointment at that precise time: for it was impossible that they should have done either good or evil previous to their birth; and, consequently, nothing of theirs could be the ground of God's dispensation towards them.

The same point is no less clearly seen in the objections which are urged against it.

The objector replies, that, if this doctrine be true, God must be unrighteous, since he withholds from one, what he gives to another[d]. Now, what room can there be for any such objection as this, except on the supposition that the Apostle has been mantaining the sovereignty of God in the disposal of his favours? On any other supposition, it would be impossible for the idea to arise, that there was, or could be, "unrighteousness with God." The Apostle's answer shews the same: for he proves that the doctrine which he had maintained was declared to Moses, when God said to him, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion[e]." And the conclusion which the Apostle draws from the whole clearly confirms the same: "So, then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy[f]." I ask again, What room could there be for such an answer, and such a conclusion, if the Apostle had not asserted and maintained the doctrine of election as exercised by God according to his own sovereign will and pleasure?

But the same is pursued still farther.

St. Paul, not contented with having established his point, prosecutes it yet farther; and declares that God had exercised the same sovereignty in raising Pharaoh to the throne of Egypt, and in making use of the pride and obduracy of that haughty monarch as the means of displaying his own almighty power, and of confirming the word which he had previously declared to Moses[g]. And this calls forth another objection: "Thou wilt say, then, unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will[h]?" Here again, you will perceive, is an objection which could not possibly arise, but on the supposition that the Apostle is maintaining the absolute sovereignty of God. And his answer to it proves the same: "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour[i]?" Of all the images that could ever

[d] ver. 14. [e] ver. 15. [f] ver. 16.
[g] ver. 17, 18. [h] ver. 19. [i] ver. 20, 21.

be thought of, it would not be possible to find one which could more strongly illustrate the sovereignty of God than this. It is here indeed supposed, that all men are *alike corrupt and sinful*, all one mass of sin; no part of which has any greater claim upon God for mercy, than the potter's clay has on him for distinguishing favours at his hands.

Let this reasoning be candidly considered, and the inference from it will be clear. Nothing but our high thoughts of *self*, and our low thoughts of *God*, could ever make us entertain a doubt about the truth which is here maintained. Indeed, we see it at this day, as well as in former ages. God chose the Jews of old, and distinguished them above the rest of the world: so he has done with the Christians now. Moreover, he had an Israel in the midst of an Israel then: and *so he has now:* a people within a people; a Church within a Church; an elect within a mass who are partakers only of external privileges. Yes, as *then*, even so at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace[k].]

2. All are not partakers of the same converting grace—

[The Jews had all the same ordinances of grace; but did not all make the same improvement of them. In the ministry of John the Baptist, those who were the least likely to receive his word were the most effectually impressed with it: "The publicans justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John; but the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him[l]." The twelve Apostles were chosen by our blessed Lord according to his sovereign will and pleasure; and for them were reserved advantages, not known to any others. To them our Lord explained in private the parables he delivered in public; saying to them, "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; but to others, in parables; that seeing, they may not see; and hearing, they may not understand[m]." To them, in like manner, was peculiar favour shewn after our Lord's resurrection; for "then opened he their understandings to understand the Scriptures[n]." But see this matter yet more plainly in the Apostle Paul. He was full of wrath, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter" against the whole Church of Christ; and yet, whilst pursuing his murderous career, he was stopped, and converted by the grace of God; the Lord Jesus Christ himself appearing to him in the way, and revealing himself to him; whilst, of all who were present, not one except himself was permitted to hear the words that were

[k] Rom. xi. 6.
[l] Luke vii. 29, 30.
[m] Luke viii. 10.
[n] Luke xxiv. 45.

spoken to him. Was here no proof of God's electing love? Take the ministry of this Apostle: some received his testimony, and others rejected it. And whence was it, that, at Philippi, a poor woman, named Lydia, embraced the truth, whilst the magistrates and a great mass of the inhabitants joined in persecuting the ministers who proclaimed it? We are told, that "the Lord opened her heart to attend to the things that were spoken by Paul[o]." The same words made one cry out, "Paul, thou art beside thyself;" and another, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian[p]." And is it not so at the present day? Are not still, as formerly, "many called, and few chosen?" Does not the Saviour himself, as preached unto men, still become a sanctuary to some, whilst he proves a stumbling-block and a rock of offence to others[q]? And whence is this? To what must it be traced, but to God's electing love? Assuredly, to that does the Apostle trace it, in the case of his Thessalonian converts: for, in his first epistle to them he says, "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God; for our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance[r]." So then it is in every instance, where persons are enabled to receive the word aright: "it is *given them* to believe[s];" and "they believe through grace[t];" or, in other words, they are "quickened from the dead[u]," and "made willing in the day of God's power[x]:" and to God must they trace their new creation, as entirely and exclusively as the creation of the world[y]. To these "the word becomes a savour of life unto life; whilst to others it is made a savour of death," to their deeper condemnation[z].]

3. All are not heirs of the same eternal glory—

[All are not vessels unto honour. But this, however, must be remembered, that whilst it is God alone who prepares any to glory, the wicked fit themselves for destruction. This is marked, in a peculiar manner, in the chapter from whence my text is taken[a]; and we must never forget it: for though the salvation of man is altogether of God, his condemnation is of himself alone, the fruit of his own wilful perseverance in sin. That those who are saved owe their happiness to God's electing love, is clear from hence, that "God hath from the beginning chosen them *to salvation*[b];" and "called them unto *his eternal glory*[c]." The process, as ordained in God's mind, and executed

[o] Acts xvi. 14, 15.
[p] Acts xxvi. 22, 28.
[q] 1 Pet. ii. 6—8.
[r] 1 Thess. i. 4, 5.
[s] Phil. i. 29.
[t] Acts xviii. 27.
[u] Eph. ii. 1.
[x] Ps. cx. 3.
[y] Eph. ii. 10.
[z] 2 Cor. ii. 16.
[a] ver. 22, 23. See the Greek.
[b] 2 Thess. ii. 13.
[c] 1 Pet. v. 10.

in his dispensations, is thus declared in the chapter preceding that which we have been considering: "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified[d]." And, among those who are exalted to glory, there will be no difference in relation to this matter: they will all acknowledge that "they did not choose God, but God them[e];" and that "they loved him because he first loved them[f]:" and, in ascribing glory to his name, they will remember this saying, "To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and the Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen[g]."]

Having shewn, I trust, the truth of the affirmation, I proceed to state,

II. The improvement to be made of it—

Amongst the diversified uses to be made of it, I will mention three:

It should teach us,

1. A holy fear and jealousy respecting ourselves—

[It is here admitted that we are *of* Israel: that, as the Jews had all been admitted into covenant with God by circumcision, so have we by baptism; and that, as "to them belonged the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the service of God, and the promises," so do all the blessings of the Gospel belong to us[h], precisely in the same manner and to the same extent that the privileges of God's ancient people belonged to them. But as, then, "all were not Israel who were of Israel," so now all are not Christians indeed who are called by the name of Christ. Our descent from Christian parents will do no more than the descent of Israel from Abraham did for them. We are expressly told on this head, that the unconverted among them were not the true circumcision: they were only "the concision:" "the circumcision were those who worshipped God in the Spirit, and rejoiced in Christ Jesus, and had no confidence in the flesh[i]." And this is the description of the true Christian: no one deserving that name who does not answer to that character. The Apostle further confirms this, when he says, "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew who is one inwardly: and circumcision is that of the heart; in the

[d] Rom. viii. 30. [e] John xv. 16. [f] 1 John iv. 10, 19.
[g] Rev. i. 5, 6. [h] Rom. ix. 4, 5. [i] Phil. iii. 3.

spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God[k]." Should we not then fear, lest we deceive ourselves, just as the Jews of old did? Should we not carefully "examine ourselves, and prove our ownselves, whether we be in the faith[l]?" Should we not compare our character with that of the saints of old, to see whether we be "Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile[m]?" Let it be well settled in our minds, that we are not indeed children of Abraham, unless we "walk in the steps of Abraham[n]," and "do his works[o]."]

2. A humble acquiescence in reference to God—

[We are extremely prone to rise against the sovereignty of God, and to deny him the right of disposing of things according to his own will and pleasure. Yet we arrogate that right to ourselves; and if we were called unjust for bestowing our alms on one and not on another, we should indignantly reply, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own[p]?" But do what we will, we cannot deny the election of God in Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob? We cannot deny that there were given to the Jews means of grace, which were withheld from all the world besides. We cannot deny the same in reference to Christians at this day: for we have in our hands the blessed Gospel, which reveals unto us the way of salvation, whilst five-sixths of the world never so much as heard of Christ. Nay, more: of those who most dispute against the doctrine of election generally, it may be doubted, whether one can be found who, when deeply convinced of his own guilt and misery, will not go to God, and implore mercy for mercy's sake, as much as the most zealous advocate of that offensive doctrine. He will scarcely venture to claim mercy on account of his own merits, whether past, present, or future. And, if he obtain a sense of God's pardoning love, I much doubt whether he will deliberately refuse to make that acknowledgment, "By the grace of God I am what I am[q]." That there are depths in this doctrine which we cannot comprehend, I readily admit. But, would the denial of it involve us in no depths? or is there any other doctrine of our holy religion which we can fully fathom? Let us know this, that whether we can comprehend God's ways or not, "the Judge of all the earth will do right[r];" and whether we are pleased to acquiesce in them or not, "He will be justified in his sayings, and be clear when he is judged[s]." Let us, then, not presume to sit in judgment upon God, or dare to "charge him foolishly:" but let us make our supplication to him, assured that "none shall seek his face in vain;"

[k] Rom. ii. 28, 29. [l] 2 Cor. xiii. 5. [m] John i. 47.
[n] Rom. iv. 12. [o] John viii. 39. [p] Matt. xx. 15.
[q] 1 Cor. xv. 10. [r] Gen. xviii. 25. [s] Rom. iii. 4.

and that "not one who shall come to him in his Son's name shall ever be cast out[t]."]

3. An adoring gratitude, if we have been made partakers of his mercy—

[We cannot but see, whether the doctrine of election be true or not, that there is an Israel within an Israel; and that, whilst a small remnant only are truly alive to God, the great mass of the Christian world are as careless about salvation as even the Jews themselves. If, then, God has in mercy favoured us, and made us partakers of his grace, shall we "sacrifice to our own net, and burn incense to our own drag[u]?" God forbid. Let us rather bow with humble adoration before our God; saying, "Why *me*, Lord? Why am *I* taken, when so many others are left[x]?" In truth, this is the spirit that becomes us. Even for the favours conferred upon us in providence, it becomes us to bless and magnify our God, with a deep sense of our own unworthiness, and with a lively gratitude for such undeserved bounties. But for the blessings of his grace, O what thanks should we render unto the Lord! Hear the Psalmist, when contemplating these things: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul! and forget not all his benefits!" Let such be the state of our minds. Surely, the more we are sensible of our obligations to God, for his free, unmerited, and sovereign grace, the more profoundly we shall adore him, and the more determinately shall we serve him.]

[t] John vi. 37. [u] Hab. i. 16. [x] Luke xvii. 34—36.

MDCCCLXXXV.

GOD'S SOVEREIGN MERCY THE SOURCE OF ALL OUR BLESSINGS.

Rom. ix. 16. *So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.*

THE Apostle, being about to declare the rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles, introduces his subject with a most solemn appeal to God, that he had "continual sorrow and heaviness in his heart," on account of the unhappy state of his Jewish brethren. He knew that the subject would be very painful to the Jews; and yet he could not, consistently with his duty to God, conceal it from them: but

he strove as much as possible to lessen the offence it would occasion, by assuring them of his unbounded affection for them, and his willingness to endure any thing, if it might but be subservient to their eternal welfare.

The subject as treated by the Apostle is no less offensive to the great mass of nominal Christians, than it was to the Jews: for he insists so strongly on God's right to dispense the blessings of his Gospel according to his own sovereign will, that the proud heart of man cannot endure it. We are apt to think we have a claim upon God; and that he is *bound* to do for *us* all that he has at any time done for his most favoured servants: and, when we are told, that he has a right to do what he will with his own, we deny him that right, and accuse him of injustice, precisely as the Jews themselves did. But the servant of God must speak, whether men will hear, or whether they forbear: he must declare to men the whole counsel of God, "even though briers and thorns be with him, and he dwell among scorpions." At the same time, it should be his most anxious endeavour to "speak the truth in love." This *we* would do. God knoweth that it is painful to us to give offence; yet not so much on our own account, as on account of those who are not able to receive our word. We would gladly do, yea, and suffer too, whatever should be necessary for their welfare: but still we cannot conceal the truth, or "keep back any thing that is profitable unto men." We entreat however, that, if we speak any thing which may not at first approve itself to those who hear it, they will give us credit for seeking conscientiously their best interests, according to the light that God hath given us.

The words of our text are evidently a conclusion drawn from a preceding argument. To view them therefore aright, we must consider,

I. The statement on which the conclusion is founded—

Having intimated the danger to which his countrymen were exposed of perishing in unbelief, he

anticipates an objection which they were disposed to make; namely, That they were in no danger, because, as descendants of Abraham, they were interested in the covenant made with him, and were heirs of all the blessings which were promised to him and to his seed: and that, consequently, if they were to perish, "the word of God would have been of no effect[a]." To this the Apostle replies, that the promises were not made to Abraham's *natural* seed, but to his *spiritual* seed, who should be partakers of Abraham's faith: and that, as they were yet in unbelief, they had no part or lot in Abraham's blessings[b]. This he proceeds to prove to them,

1. From undeniable and acknowledged facts—

[The blessings of the covenant were not given to all Abraham's *natural* seed, even in the very first instance. Ishmael, who was born according to the course of nature, had no part in that covenant; the blessings of which were restricted to Isaac, who was born many years afterwards, not according to the common course of nature, but solely by virtue of an express promise. Here then was a proof, even in the immediate children of Abraham, that persons might be lineally descended from him, and yet be left without any interest in the covenant made with him.

But a further, and still stronger, proof of this took place in the children of this very Isaac, to whom the promise was restricted. His wife Rebecca bare him twins: and whilst these children were yet in the womb, and "before they could possibly have done either good or evil, it was said to her, The elder shall serve the younger[c]:" which prophecy was accomplished to their latest posterity, as the Prophet Malachi attests, saying, "Jacob have I loved; but Esau have I hated[d]." Now if they should think that in the former instance respect was had to the character of the two children, Ishmael and Isaac, and that the decree was founded on *that*, such a notion is altogether excluded from the present instance, because the children had done neither good nor evil; and the reason of the decree is expressly said to be, "that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth."

Here then an exclusion of a part of the *natural* seed is further proved, and *that* too by the sovereign disposal of God

[a] ver. 6. [b] ver. 7, 8.
[c] ver. 9—12. [d] ver. 13. with Mal. i. 2, 3.

himself, irrespective of the characters of the persons respecting whom the decree was made. How much more therefore might those of Abraham's descendants who should continue obstinate in unbelief, be excluded from the blessings of that covenant, which they themselves were so averse to embrace.]

2. From the express declarations of God himself—

[The Jews in the Apostle's days trusted in the words of Moses, which they interpreted as comprehending all the Jewish nation without exception within the bonds of the covenant. To Moses therefore the Apostle has recourse; and appeals to what God himself had spoken to him. As in the foregoing instances God had exercised his own sovereign will in appointing who should, and who should not, be partakers of his covenant, so, in his communications with Moses also he had claimed to himself the same right, and declared that he would act in the same sovereign way: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion[a]." Here God considers all the human race as in a state of guilt and misery, no one of them having any claim on him for mercy, or any thing that could entitle him to a preference beyond his brethren: and he declares, that as he would exercise his own sovereign will in dispensing his blessings to them, so he would have his sovereign grace and mercy acknowledged by all who should receive them.

This point is further confirmed by the Apostle's adducing what God had spoken also to Pharaoh. God had exalted Pharaoh to the throne of Egypt, and had invested him with the most arbitrary and unbounded power. Such power was necessary, in order that there might be full scope for the rebellion of man, and the consequent triumphs of God over him. God knew that there were in the heart of Pharaoh all those dispositions which would resist him to the uttermost; and that he would thus call forth eventually those judgments which God, for his own glory, had determined to inflict on the oppressors of his people: and, whilst Pharaoh was in the very act of rebellion, and hardening himself more and more against his God, God said to him, "For this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." The Apostle, having cited this in confirmation of what he had said respecting Moses, asserts in yet stronger language than before, "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."

Thus the Apostle has proved beyond all contradiction the unquestionable right of God to give, or to withhold, his blessings, according to his own sovereign will and pleasure.

[a] ver. 15. with Exod. xxxiii. 19.

But before we proceed to the conclusion which the Apostle draws from hence, we would guard what has been already spoken from any misconstruction. Though God's *right* to give or to withhold his blessings is asserted, together with the actual bestowment of them according to his sovereign will, yet *he never withholds his blessing from any creature who humbly seeks it at his hands;* much less does he ever infuse evil into the mind of any man in order to glorify himself in his destruction. His hardening of Pharaoh's heart consisted in leaving him to himself, and to the unrestrained exercise of his own evil dispositions: and if we were all left as Pharaoh was, we should harden our own hearts precisely as Pharaoh did. In a word, *God's blessings are never dispensed but in a way of grace; his judgments are never executed but in a way of righteous retribution.*]

Having thus stated the argument on which the Apostle's conclusion is founded, we come to the consideration of,

II. The conclusion itself—

The conclusion is justly formed from the premises. It is indeed a humiliating conclusion, and a truth which our proud hearts are very averse to acknowledge; but still we must join issue with the Apostle, and say, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

Let not this however be understood, as though it sanctioned any want of exertion on our part—

[God does not here *forbid* us to will or to run, nor does he *exempt us from the duty* of both willing and running: no such thing is here expressed, nor can any such thing be deduced from it. How grievous is it that any should be found impious enough to cite this passage as discountenancing exertions on our part! In the whole sacred records, from the beginning to the end, there is not to be found one single word that can warrant such an idea as this. On the contrary, God always complains of us for not exerting ourselves, and refers our final condemnation to this as its proper ground and cause: "Ye *will not* come unto me, that ye might have life," says our Lord. "How often would I have gathered you together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye *would not!*" As for those who say, "I can do nothing without God, and therefore, till God come, I may as well sit still, and attempt nothing;" God, so far from giving occasion for such a sentiment and such conduct, calls us most earnestly to exertion, and promises that we shall not exert ourselves in vain:

"Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:" and, "Whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out:" and, "When said I ever to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain?" Know then, that to found any such sentiment on the words of the Apostle, is a gross perversion of the word of God, and an impious plea for antinomian licentiousness. But, that you may have a just view of this assertion,]

Its plain import is, that God's free grace and mercy are the true and only sources of all good—

[Whatever be our success in the divine life, we must not refer it to our own volitions, or our own exertions. For, what inclination has the natural man to that which is truly good? None at all: there is not one good thought or desire in the heart of an unregenerate man: his will is altogether towards what is evil[f]: and if a good inclination be manifested by any one of us, it has been previously put into our hearts by Him who "giveth us to *will* and to do, of his own good pleasure[g]." Nor can any exertions of ours in our natural state be of themselves effectual; for our blessed Lord expressly says, "Without me, or separate from me, ye can do nothing." We must therefore "never sacrifice to our own net, or burn incense to our own drag." God must have all the glory: it is "he who worketh all our works in us:" "Of him is our fruit found:" and to all eternity our song must be, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the praise." It is impossible for us ever to be too jealous upon this head. We are told, that "*of* him are all things, and *for* him are all things:" and therefore to him we must look for every thing that we need; and to him, even to his sovereign grace and mercy, must we ascribe every thing that we have received. If we differ, either from others, or from our former selves, we must never forget, one moment, "who it is that hath made us to differ:" and if we be able to say with the Apostle, "I have laboured more abundantly than others," we must instantly correct ourselves, and add, "Yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me[h]."]

It remains only now that we SHEW you.

[f] Gen. vi. 5. [g] Phil. ii. 13.

[h] There are some who put a totally different construction on our text, and interpret it as though the Apostle had said, "It is not of him *only* that willeth, &c." Thus, by their *interpolation*, they expressly *contradict the Apostle*, and *subvert the whole train of his reasoning*. If this were the meaning of the Apostle, what occasion would there be for the objections of his adversaries in ver. 14. and ver. 19.? Alas! that ever such liberties should be taken with the word of God!

1. How these sentiments are to be *maintained*—

[We confess with grief and shame that many carry these sentiments too far, and maintain them in a very unhallowed way. But, whilst we maintain what God has so plainly taught, we would lift our voice without ceasing against every abuse of these doctrines. To those who accord with these views of divine truth, we most affectionately suggest the following cautions. *Take heed to the manner in which you maintain these truths.* Let none of you maintain them *presumptuously*, as though you could fathom the depths contained in them, or as though they gave you any licence for sloth and supineness. They contain mysteries, which God alone can fully comprehend, and difficulties which he alone can fully reconcile: but be it remembered, that there are far more and greater difficulties involved in a denial of them: and that our wisdom is, to receive every word of God with child-like simplicity, and to say, "What I know not now, I shall know hereafter."

Nor let any hold them *irreverently*. Some will speak of these deep things of God as familiarly as if there were no mystery at all in them, or as if they were the uninspired dogmas of some ancient philosopher. But when we enter on "such holy ground," we should, as Moses, "take off our shoes," and proceed with reverential awe. "God is in heaven, and we upon earth; therefore should our words be few," and diffident, and humble.

Nor should they be maintained *uncharitably*. Many there are who cannot see these truths, who yet are in a state truly pleasing to God; yea many, at whose feet the best of us may be glad to be found in heaven. It is a great evil, when these doctrines are made a ground of separation one from another, and when the advocates of different systems anathematize each other. Let all such dispositions be banished from the Church of God. Whoever may be wrong, they never can be right who violate charity, or refuse to others the right of judging for themselves. For the fundamental truths of Christianity, we must contend to the uttermost, (though even for *them* with meekness and love:) but in reference to truths which are involved in so much obscurity as those which relate to the sovereignty of God, mutual kindness and concession are far better than vehement argumentation and uncharitable discussion.

Lastly, let not these truths be maintained *exclusively*. Many are so partial to these deeper truths, that they can hardly condescend to speak of repentance and faith; and, as for exhortations to duty, they are apt to think such things *legal* and *carnal*. O beloved! flee from such a spirit, as you would from the plague: wherever it exists, it betrays a sad want of humility. Be ye as little children: let every word of God be dear to you;

and be as ready to dwell upon the invitations, and precepts, and exhortations of the Gospel, as on these deeper mysteries, which may easily be strained too far, and may give occasion for inferences, plausible indeed, but erroneous, and contrary to the analogy of faith.]

2. How they are to be *improved*—

[The proper use of these deeper truths is to abase us with humility, as creatures destitute of all good; and at the same time to exalt us, as creatures infinitely indebted to the grace of God. Make this improvement of them, and they can never do you any harm: yea, receive them for these ends, and there are no other truths whatever that will operate to an equal extent. Who ever maintained the doctrines of grace more strenuously than the Apostle Paul? yet who ever so laboured in the cause of his adorable Redeemer? Take him then for your pattern, both in your sentiments and conduct; and then you will shew, that nothing so "constrains, as the love of Christ;" nothing so stimulates to a compliance with God's will, as a sense of obligation to the riches of his grace.]

MDCCCLXXXVI.

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY NOT TO BE ARRAIGNED BY MEN.

Rom. ix. 19—24. *Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?*

THERE are some persons so partial to, what we may call, the high doctrines of the Gospel, that they can scarcely endure to hear any thing else: they are like persons whose taste is vitiated by strong drink or highly-seasoned food; they have no appetite for any thing which does not savour of their favourite opinions. This is a great evil in the Church, not only as injuring the souls in whom it exists, but as

tending exceedingly to strengthen the prejudices of others against the doctrines which are so abused. Those who are thus disposed towards "the deep things of God," fancy themselves *edified*, merely because their corrupt taste is gratified: but their edification is not real and scriptural; for, if it were, it would incline them to receive with meekness and humility every word of God; whereas they treat with contempt every thing which seems to savour of plain practical religion. We regret exceedingly that such persons exist: but we must not, on their account, run into an opposite extreme, and keep these doctrines altogether out of sight: we must "not shun to declare unto men the whole counsel of God." Whatsoever is revealed in the sacred records must be brought forth in its season: nor are we at liberty to "withhold from men any thing that may be profitable unto them." We therefore address ourselves to every subject in its place: though on such subjects as that which is before us, we would do it with fear and trembling, conscious how unable we are to do justice to it, and fearful lest by any means we should make it an occasion of offence to those who are not prepared for the investigation of it. The sovereignty of God is to the proud heart of man an unpalatable subject; but in the passage before us we are called to vindicate it against the objections of those who are disposed, like the Jew in our text, to contend against it.

To place the matter in its true light, we shall consider,

I. The point at issue between the objector and St. Paul—

[St. Paul had strongly intimated, that the Jews were now to be rejected from the Church of God, and that the Gentiles were to be admitted into it. This he knew was a most offensive subject to the Jews; and therefore he had shewn, both from God's word to Moses, and his dealings with Pharaoh, that God had a right to communicate his blessings, or execute his judgments, in such a way as should conduce most to his own glory. The Jew, not convinced, is represented as declaring, that, if God exercise his sovereignty in this way, the blame of

man's condemnation must be transferred to God himself, since it was impossible for man to resist his will.

That this was the jet of the question between them, is evident; for to this end St. Paul's arguments had tended; and nothing less than this could have given rise to such an objection: to this also the answer of the Apostle directly applies. The objection, it is true, did not *fairly* arise out of St. Paul's statement: but the Jew *took occasion* from his statement to found his objection upon it: and to the question, thus stated, we must now reply.]

II. The Apostle's determination of it—

St. Paul hearing such a blasphemous objection as this, "Why doth God yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?" replies to it,

1. In a way of just reprehension—

["Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?" Consider thyself as *a creature;* What right hast thou to sit in judgment upon God? Dost thou understand all his counsels? Art thou able to fathom the depth of his wisdom? Canst thou "find out the Almighty to perfection?" How canst thou presume thus to arraign the conduct of thy God, and to "condemn him that thou mayest be justified?" What wouldest thou think of thine own child, if he, whilst yet a child, should stand up and accuse thee as unwise and unjust, in the most deliberate exercise of thy counsels? or, What wouldest thou think of a peasant who should presume thus to sit in judgment upon the counsels of a minister of state? Art *thou* then authorized to arraign the conduct of thy *God?*

But consider thyself as *a sinner*, and how atrocious does thy conduct then appear! Thou who mightest justly have been consigned over to perdition the first moment thou hadst sinned, dost thou complain of thy God as unjust and tyrannical, if he dispense to others the blessings which thou hast refused to accept? Impious wretch! As well might the clay rise up against the potter, and condemn him for having fashioned it according to his own will.]

2. In a way of sound argument—

[Two things St. Paul proceeds to substantiate against his objector: the one was, *That God had a right to dispose of every thing according to his own sovereign will and pleasure:* and the other was, *That in the way he had hitherto disposed of them, and had determined still to dispose of them, he was fully justified.*]

Let us consider these assertions more fully—

[A potter, it is acknowledged, has a sovereign right over his clay: and so has God over all the works of his hands. When he formed angels, was he bound to furnish them with all the faculties they possess? and, having formed them, might he not have annihilated them again, and consigned them over again to their former non-existence? When he formed man and beast *of the same clay*, might he not have given higher faculties to the brute creation, and less to man? or might he not have reduced man immediately to the state of the beasts, without doing any injury to man? Is not this, in reality, what God is doing every day, as it were, before our eyes; bereaving one and another of his mental faculties, and reducing him to a state far below the beasts? It is evident, that God may *of the same lump* make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour, either in their first creation, or in their subsequent use and destination.

The same also we may say in relation to the eternal states of men, if only we consider them, as they really are, one vast mass of guilt and corruption. When Adam fell, God was at liberty to leave him as he was, in all his guilt and corruption, or to redeem him from it, and to make him a vessel of honour by his new-creating power. When God chose Abraham out of the whole world of idolaters, he was at liberty to have chosen others besides him, if he had been pleased so to do, or to have restricted the blessings of his covenant to Ishmael and Esau, instead of limiting them to Isaac and Jacob. If he had seen fit to do this, whom would he have injured? or who would have had any right to complain? Whom did he injure when he chose the Jews? Did he by separating them from the rest of mankind, and granting exclusively to them the ordinances of his grace, do any injustice to the Gentile world? or, now that he is pleased to send his Gospel to the Gentiles, does he do any injustice to the Jews? In favouring *us* with the full light of revelation, does he injure the millions of Mahometans and Pagans who are less favoured than ourselves? In like manner, if he send to some of us fuller opportunities of instruction than to others, or richer communications of his grace, is he not at liberty to do so?

Let it be remembered, that the question is not, Whether God shall punish an innocent person, or a guilty person beyond his deserts? *That* could receive no other answer than that given by the Apostle, "Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid." But the question is, Whether, when all mankind are in a state of guilt and condemnation, God may not "have mercy on whom he will have mercy?" And to this question we reply by asking another, "May He not do what he will with his own[a]?"

[a] Matt. xx. 15.

But let us turn to the latter part of the Apostle's answer; wherein he asserts confidently, that if we attend carefully to the way in which God has disposed of men, and has determined still to dispose of them, he is, and ever must be, justified.

God has determined to get himself glory upon all mankind, whether they will it, or not. He will be glorified both in them that are saved, and in them that perish.

"What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and make his power known, endure the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?" is he not at liberty to do so? Take, for instance, Pharaoh. If God had pleased, he might have cut off Pharaoh on his first refusal to let the people of Israel go; or at any one of the ten successive plagues: but he was not *obliged* to do so: he was surely at liberty to spare him, and exercise forbearance towards him, and to remove in succession the different plagues from him, and to give him space for repentance, till he had filled up the measure of his iniquities, and was quite ripe for those signal judgments that had been denounced against him. In like manner, the Jews might justly have been cut off, when they renounced their allegiance to God, and worshipped the golden calf. God might, without any impeachment of his justice, have executed then the threatened judgment of destroying instantly that rebellious nation, and raising up another from the loins of Moses. But he saw fit to exercise mercy towards them, and to impart to them yet more abundant communications of his grace and favour. Surely in this he did them no injury. So also under all their provocations in the wilderness, during the space of forty years, and under all their apostasies from him in the land of Canaan for the space of fifteen hundred years, he might, if he had seen fit, have destroyed them: and, to say the least, he did them no injury in bearing with them, till, by the crucifixion of their Messiah, they had "filled up the measure of their own and their fathers' iniquities." God's fore-knowing how much they would abuse his mercies, was no reason why he should not exercise mercy towards them: for by his forbearance his mercy was displayed; and by their accumulated guilt and aggravated condemnation his indignation against sin, and his power to avenge it, were more conspicuously displayed. The same we may say in reference to any person or number of persons; God is not bound to cut them off the moment they sin against him: he may continue to cultivate the barren fig-tree year after year, if he be pleased to do so, in order to shew more clearly its incurable sterility, and his own justice in its final excision. Thus, I say, He may act towards "the vessels of his wrath."

So also he may pursue a similar line of conduct towards "the vessels of mercy," in order ultimately to "make known

upon them the riches of his glory." He was not compelled to bring out Abraham from his family and his country, while he was yet a child: he was at liberty to leave him bowing down to stocks and stones, like all the rest around him, till the hour which he in his secret counsels had appointed for his effectual calling was arrived. Nor, when God called Abraham, was he compelled to call all other Gentiles at the same time: he was at liberty to "leave them to their own ways" till the times of the Messiah, in order to shew more fully, that "the world by wisdom knew not God," and that, if left to themselves, nothing but universal ruin must ensue. St. Paul tells us, that God, in his secret counsels, had "separated him as a chosen vessel, even from his mother's womb:" yet had God left him for many years to his own heart's lusts, and to the perpetration of the most enormous wickedness. Was God unjust in this? Was God bound to convert him before? Was he not at liberty to leave this man to the dictates of his own deceived conscience, that he might gain the more glory in his conversion, and "shew forth in him all long-suffering, for a pattern to all who should hereafter believe in him to life everlasting[b]?" The dying thief too,—Was not God at liberty to let him go on as he did to the latest hour of his life, that he might shew in him what divine grace and mercy could effect, even at the eleventh hour? God would have done no injury to any of these, if he had never so distinguished them by his power and grace: nor, in having so distinguished them, has he done any injury to others, either to Paul's companions in his journey, or to the other thief upon the cross. It was thus that our blessed Lord acted in reference to Lazarus. When called to come and heal him, he staid till he had been dead four days *on purpose* that, by raising him after so long a time, his own power might be the more abundantly glorified[c]. And did he any wrong in this?

But if our proud hearts be yet disposed to rise up against God, and reply against him, the extraordinary caution with which St. Paul gives his answer must silence us for ever. Between the vessels of wrath and the vessels of mercy he makes this striking distinction; that the vessels of wrath *fit themselves for destruction*, but the vessels of mercy are *prepared for glory by their God*[d]. The judgments executed on the ungodly, at whatever period they are inflicted, are brought on them, not by any absolute decree of God, but by their own wilful and obstinate continuance in sin: but the blessings imparted to the godly are solely the fruit of God's sovereign grace and mercy. They who perish must take all the shame to them-

[b] 1 Tim. i. 16. [c] John xi. 6, 15, 40.
[d] See the Greek.

selves; and those who are saved must give all the glory to their God.

The manner in which the Apostle states his argument, should not be altogether unnoticed. "What if" so and so? Who has any thing to reply against it? Is there any thing in it contrary to *reason?* let him bring it to the test of reason. Is there any thing contrary to *Scripture?* let him consult the passages to which I now refer him, and he shall see, that this very mode of dealing towards all mankind, whether Jews or Gentiles, is precisely that which all the prophets have taught us to expect at the hands of God[a]. He has, for his own glory, left the Gentiles for two thousand years, and taken the Jews for his peculiar people; and now, for his own glory also, will he for a season leave the Jews, and take the Gentiles. In this matter, neither the one nor the other have any claim upon him: in taking the one and leaving the other, he did no injustice *formerly:* and in now abandoning those whom he formerly took, (more especially since they have filled up the measure of their iniquities,) and in taking those whom he then left, he does no injustice *now:* but in both he is, and will be, glorified: he even in this world glorifies, both in the one and in the other, his patience and long-suffering, and forbearance; but, in the world to come, he will glorify his perfections upon both of them in a more appropriate way;—on the vessels of wrath, his *power;* but on the vessels of mercy, his free, and sovereign, and unbounded *grace.*]

Having investigated with care the Apostle's answer, we will conclude with suggesting,

III. The proper improvement of the subject—

The subject offers many IMPORTANT HINTS,

1. To objectors—

[These, alas! are a very numerous body, even in the Christian world. Favoured as *we* are above the rest of the world, it might be hoped that *we* should be the last to arraign the sovereignty of Almighty God. Yet amongst us there are many who will dispute against the doctrines of grace, precisely in the way that the unbelieving Jew is represented as doing in our text. One would be ready to suppose, from the confidence with which they urge their impious objections, that they had been the secret counsellors of the Most High. They determine, without any hesitation or doubt, what will, and what will not, consist with the Divine attributes.

Beloved brethren, this is not the way in which it becomes frail dust and ashes to proceed: and if you will presume thus

[a] ver. 25—27.

to reprove God, you must "answer it" at your cost[f]. Be assured that such conduct ill becomes you, and is most offensive to your God[g]: and your wisdom is to forbear all such impiety in future[h]. Go to any person deeply versed in sciences of any kind; and he will tell you paradoxes without number which you cannot understand, which yet he knows to be true, and is able to prove, if you had sufficient knowledge of that particular science to comprehend him. Know then, that God also, if he have revealed what appears paradoxical to you, can fully reconcile his own declarations, and will do so in the eternal world; though, if he were now to do it, you would not have capacity sufficient to discern the truth and excellence of his communications. Be assured, that, "as the heavens are high above the earth, so are his thoughts and ways high above yours."

But there are many among those who pretend to vindicate the ways of God, who are scarcely less worthy of reproof than those who presume to condemn them. There are many who speak of "the deep things of God," as if they were as plain and easy and intelligible as the simplest truth that can be mentioned. They dwell exclusively on these great and hidden mysteries, and leave all the plainer doctrines of repentance, faith, and obedience, as *low* matters, unworthy of their attention, and as *unprofitable* to any good end. Nothing pleases them but what brings immediately to their view the Divine decrees: and of these they speak in a way that the Scriptures by no means authorize. They draw conclusions from partial statements, without giving due weight to things which God himself has spoken on the opposite side: and then they vindicate with unhallowed boldness and confidence what they themselves have put, as it were, into the mouth of God. This was the very conduct of Job's friends; and justly were they rebuked by God for their presumption. They *took partial declarations* of God, and then *put their own unqualified construction upon them*, and *deduced from them inferences which they were never intended to bear*. In this way they bore down righteous Job as an ignorant self-deceiver. But God declared that they had not spoken the thing that was right, as his servant Job had done; and required them to humble themselves for their folly and impiety. Let not any of you ever subject yourselves to the same reproof: for "Woe to him," saith God, "that striveth with his Maker[i]." It becomes you, doubtless, to investigate, and as far as possible to understand, every truth of God: but, in things so infinitely beyond the reach of human intellect, it becomes you to be humble, modest, diffident: and in things respecting which the most pious men may differ in their judg-

[f] Job. xl. 2. [g] Job xl. 8. [h] Job xl. 5. [i] Isai. xlv. 9.

ment, it becomes you cheerfully to concede to others the liberty which you arrogate to yourselves. And we are well persuaded, that mutual candour and forbearance among those of opposite principles, would do infinitely more towards the bringing all to just views, than all the angry contentions of violent partisans.]

2. To all persons without exception—

[You, brethren, have other things to do than to be wasting your time about unprofitable disputes. You are all at this very moment vessels of wrath, or vessels of mercy: you are now, even whilst I am speaking to you, under the hands of the Potter. You are actually upon the lathes, preparing and fashioning, either for vessels of honour, or vessels of dishonour. The question that most concerns you is, for which you are preparing? and how you may know for which you are destined? In order to ascertain this, you need not look into the book of God's decrees, but simply examine the state of your own hearts. For what are you preparing? Are you diligently seeking after God from day to day? Are you living by faith upon the Lord Jesus Christ, washing daily in the fountain of his blood, and renewed daily by the operations of his Spirit? Are you progressively advancing in the enjoyment of his presence, the performance of his will, and the attainment of his image? Are you, in a word, beginning to live the life of heaven upon earth? This will mark you vessels of honour: and the want of this is sufficient to stamp you vessels unto dishonour. It is not necessary that you should be committing any flagrant sins in order to constitute you vessels of wrath: it is quite sufficient that you are not growing up into Christ as your living Head, and devoted altogether to his service and glory. Let these inquiries then occupy your mind, and trouble not yourselves about the "secret things which belong only to your God." Whether you are pleased with the Potter or not, he is going on with his work; and in a short time he will cut you from the lathe, and fix your everlasting destinies. But, blessed be his name! He is able to change both your form and use: and, if you call upon him, he will do it; and he can do it as easily as a potter can mar the clay which has been formed only for a degraded use, and fashion it into a vessel of the most dignified description. Whilst you are upon the lathe, nothing is impossible: and who can tell but that you have been suffered, even to this hour, to fit yourselves for vessels of wrath, in order that God may be the more glorified in the change that shall be wrought in you? Yes, perhaps the hour is now come for Saul's conversion: perhaps this is the hour when he has decreed to humble you in the dust before him, and to make you a vessel

of honour that shall display, almost beyond all others, the riches of his glory? O lift up your hearts to him, and pray, that at this time his grace may be magnified in you, and that you may be monuments of his love and mercy to all eternity.

But perhaps with others the hour is come, when the measure of your iniquities shall be filled, and when, like Pharaoh, you shall be made signal monuments of God's wrath and indignation. What a fearful thought! The Lord grant that it may not be realized in any of you. But beware! His mercy and forbearance will have an end; and that end may be much nearer than you expect. Let not one hour more pass unimproved: but "seek ye the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him whilst he is near."

As for you who have reason to hope that you are already vessels of mercy, O! bless and praise your God. Remember, ye were taken from the same mass of clay, as others, who bear a very different shape. Remember, too, to whom you owe the distinction that has been conferred upon you. Had you been left to yourselves, you would have been in as degraded a state as any. It is God, and God alone, who has made you to differ, either from others, or from your former selves. Give him then the glory of his rich and sovereign grace, and seek daily to become more and more "vessels of honour, meet for your Master's use[k]."]

[k] 2 Tim. ii. 20, 21.

MDCCCLXXXVII.

CHRIST REJECTED BY THE JEWS, AND BELIEVED ON BY THE GENTILES.

Rom. ix. 30—33. *What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling-stone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.*

A VERY great proportion of the controversies which exist in the Christian world, arise from an overstraining of just principles, and carrying them to an undue extent. Many are not contented with maintaining what God has plainly declared; but they will

found on his declarations every thing that appears to be deducible from them. But, however legitimate any deduction may appear to us, we should make a great difference between it and the word on which it is founded; more especially if there be in the Holy Scriptures other passages directly opposed to our deductions. We should remember, that our finite faculties are incapable of comprehending all that the infinitely wise God has seen fit to reveal: and therefore, when we advance even an hair's breadth beyond what God has expressly authorized, we should proceed with the utmost caution and diffidence. A rash and presumptuous mind will, without hesitation, build the doctrine of reprobation upon the declarations of St. Paul in this chapter. But St. Paul forbare to press his principles so far, because, however such an inference might appear just in the eyes of fallible man, it would have been in direct opposition to other declarations of Almighty God. His moderation is beautifully exhibited in this chapter. In order to silence the blasphemous cavils of an objector, he had been constrained to occupy high ground, and to assert God's sovereign right to dispose of all his creatures, even as the potter has power over the clay, which he has prepared for his own use. But when he comes to sum up his argument, he does not refer the rejection of the Jews to the mere sovereign will of God, but to their own obstinate pride and unbelief: thereby shewing us, that, whilst we properly refer all good to God, we must trace all evil to ourselves: if we are saved, it is God who saves us, from first to last; but, if we perish, we perish through our own fault alone.

For the further elucidation of our text, we shall consider,

I. The fact here stated—

It was a plain and undeniable fact, that the Gentiles had embraced the Gospel, and the Jews had rejected it—

[The Gentiles, till they heard the Gospel, were in a most deplorable state of wickedness[a]: nor did they, at least

[a] See Rom. i. throughout.

with very few exceptions, at all think of seeking after God. Having but little sense of their guilt, and no idea whatever of any way in which their guilt might be removed, they concerned not themselves about a future state. The sentiment of the great mass among them was, "Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die." But, on the first proclamation of the Gospel to them, they received it gladly, and experienced, throughout all the Roman empire, its saving benefits. Thus was fulfilled in them that prophecy, "I am sought of them that asked not for me: I am found of them that sought me not[b]."

The Jews, on the other hand, many of them at least, had a considerable desire after a righteousness that should justify them before God: and they actually sought after such a righteousness, by conforming to the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic law. But through their undue attachment to that law, which was now fulfilled and abrogated in Christ Jesus, they set themselves against the Gospel, and thereby cut themselves off from all participation of its benefits. The offer of salvation, through the merits of another, was a stumbling-block to them: they thought, that if they observed the duties of the moral law, and compensated for their defects by a strict attention to the ceremonial law, all would be well: and being persuaded of this, they would not hear of a salvation, which dispensed with the observances on which they placed so great a dependence. *It was to this alone, and not to any secret and irresistible decrees of God*, that they were thus left to perish. Thus it was that the Gentiles embraced the Gospel, and were saved by it; whilst the Jews, with all their superior advantages, rejected it, and perished.]

But this fact only verified what had been long since predicted by the prophets—

[Christ had been represented as "a foundation-stone," on which whosoever should build should live for ever[c]. On the other hand, he had been represented as a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, over which many would fall to their heavier condemnation[d]. Thus the very Scriptures that announced his advent, declared that he should be "set for the fall, as well as for the rising again, of many *in Israel*[e]." This, if viewed abstractedly, was a very improbable event: for, however he might be disregarded by the Gentiles, the probability was, that the Jews, of whose nation he was, who expected his advent, and, from their own prophecies, might have learned his character; who actually saw all his miracles,

[b] Isai. lxv. 1.
[c] Isai. xxviii. 16.
[d] Isai. viii. 14. 15.
[e] Luke ii. 34.

and heard all his discourses; who, moreover, were assured on the most infallible testimony respecting his resurrection from the dead; who saw also the very same miracles wrought by his followers as had before been wrought by himself; I say, the probability was, that the Jews would have immediately become his most devoted followers. But the conduct of this infatuated people was altogether contrary to all such expectations; and they fulfilled the prophecies which they did not understand.]

Such was the fact stated by St. Paul. Let us now attend to,

II. The instruction to be gathered from it—

Surely, in this fact, we may SEE the following truths:

1. That how earnest soever we may be after salvation, we never shall attain it, if we seek it in a self-righteous way—

[Some of the Jews, we know, were very earnest in their endeavours to fulfil their law. Paul's description of himself in his unconverted state, abundantly proves this[f]. So at this time many are very studious to approve themselves to God, according to the light that is in them: but they know not in what way to come to him. They do not see the nature and extent of the moral law; which, having been once violated, can never justify an immortal soul[g]. They do not see that there is a new and living way opened for them into the holy of holies by the sacrifice of the Son of God[h]. They know not what our blessed Lord has so plainly told them, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me[i]." But we must declare to all such persons, that they are fatally deluded: "their zeal is not according to knowledge:" whilst they go about to establish a righteousness of their own, and refuse to submit to the righteousness provided for them by God, they cut themselves off from all the blessings of the Gospel[k]. Nor is it only by an avowed reliance on their works alone that they bring this evil on themselves: they do it with equal certainty by blending their own works in *any* measure, or in *any* degree, with the merits of Christ[l]———— Know then, all of you, that, if ever you would be partakers of Christ and of his salvation, you must seek to be found in Christ, not relying in any respect on your own righteousness, but trusting altogether in his alone[m]———— If you would gain

[f] Phil. iii. 5, 6. [g] Gal. iii. 10. [h] Heb. x. 19, 20.
[i] John xiv. 6. [k] Rom. x. 2—4.
[l] Gal. v. 2, 4. with Rom. xi. 6. [m] Phil. iii. 9.

the prize, you must not only strive, but "strive lawfully," according to the rules that have been prescribed[n].]

2. That how regardless soever we have been about salvation hitherto, we shall attain to it the very instant we believe in Christ—

[The Gentiles at large give us a very just, but awful, picture of man's depravity: yet, when they were altogether dead, God "passed by them, and bade them live[o]." Thus, if his voice in the Gospel reach our ears, and enter into our hearts, we also shall live before him. There was no interval between the obedience of Zaccheus to the Saviour's call, and "the coming of salvation to his house." The converts on the day of Pentecost were justified, the very instant they believed; and in like manner shall "all who believe be justified from all things." The most perfect representation of this truth may be found in the ordinance of the brazen serpent which shadowed it forth. There was but one way of cure for all that were dying of their wounds; and that was, a sight of the brazen serpent. On the other hand, there was no interval between their use of that remedy, and their experience of the cure. Thus, then, the Lord Jesus Christ says to us, "Look unto me and be saved, all the ends of the earth:" and, if we will in a full reliance on his word direct our eyes unto him, "we shall never be ashamed" of our hope ———]

3. That how calumniated soever this way of salvation is, the very calumnies that are raised against it, attest its truth—

[We must not be understood to say, that the mere circumstance of any plan of salvation giving offence proves that plan to be true and scriptural: for even the Gospel itself may be so crudely and injudiciously stated, as to give *just* offence; but this we say, that *any plan of salvation which gives no offence to self-righteous men, is certainly not of God.* Objections without number were made against St. Paul's statements. When he said that salvation was altogether *of grace*, his enemies replied, that in that case God must be partial and unjust. When he said it was *by faith*, then they replied, that he dispensed with good works. The same objections even to this hour are universally brought against the same statements: and we may be infallibly sure, that, if no objections of the same kind be urged against us, we do not state the Gospel as Paul did: we are accommodating ourselves to the pride and prejudice of an ignorant world, instead of preaching the Gospel as freely and as fully as we ought. Let none then be discouraged

[n] 2 Tim. ii. 5. [o] Ezek. xvi. 6. with Eph. ii. 4, 5.

when they hear the Gospel evil spoken of; neither let them wonder if it be "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness," as in the days of old. It is so, and it must be so, as long as man shall continue unhumbled before God: and if you find it so amongst the circle in which you move, know that, *as far as that circumstance goes*, it is no proof whatever that what you hear is erroneous, but a strong presumptive evidence, that the word you hear is the very truth of God, the same glorious salvation which Paul preached. Only be truly willing to have God exalted, and your own souls humbled in the dust before him, and then you will find, that the Gospel offers you precisely such a remedy as you want, and that "it is the power of God unto salvation to all them that believe."]

MDCCCLXXXVIII.

PAUL'S LOVE TO HIS BRETHREN.

Rom. x. 1. *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.*

TO seek the salvation of our fellow-creatures is but an unthankful office. The intimations which we are obliged to give them respecting their guilt and danger, are considered by them as uncharitable censures, rather than as friendly admonitions; and thus we call forth only the resentment of those, whose eternal interests we are most anxious to promote. St. Paul, who was most abundant in labours for the salvation of his brethren, experienced, beyond all others, their hatred and contempt. Aware that this would be the effect of his exertions, he was always studious to counteract it; and scarcely ever mentioned an offensive truth, without testifying, by some following observations, that it was dictated by love. Throughout the whole Epistle to the Romans, this appears in a very striking light. Having shewn, in the second chapter, that the Jews, notwithstanding their being in covenant with God by circumcision, were as much in need of salvation as the idolatrous and abandoned Gentiles, he corrects the apparent severity of his remarks, by saying, "What advantage then hath

the Jew? Much every way[a]." Proceeding afterwards to shew that the law could not justify any man, and fearing that he might on that account be thought an enemy to the law, he removes all ground for that suspicion; "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law[b]." Comparing afterwards his connexion with the law to the state of a woman that has lost her husband, who is therefore at liberty to be married to another; and observing, that sin took occasion from the law itself to bring forth fruit unto death; he guards them against imagining that he meant thereby to cast any reflection upon the law, as though it was itself sinful; "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid[c]." Having yet further, in the prosecution of his argument, asserted, that the incapacity of the law to save men was the reason of God's sending his own Son to save them, he (after some enlargement on this subject) appeals to God in the most solemn manner, that, instead of speaking these things from any ill will to his Jewish brethren, he "could wish himself even accursed from Christ for them," if by that means they might be saved[d]. Thus also, in the passage before us, having shewn that the Gentiles were admitted into the Church and made partakers of salvation, while the Jews were cast out, he assures them that nothing could be more adverse to his wishes than this awful dispensation; "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

The same caution would we also use in ministering to you the Gospel of Christ. We are of necessity obliged to declare to you many unwelcome truths: but God knoweth, that our only motive in declaring them is, to benefit and save your souls; and that, while *that* is the object of our public ministrations, it is also the frequent subject of our secret prayers.

Let us, in elucidating our text, consider,

[a] Rom. ii. 28, 29. with iii. 1, 2. [b] Rom. iii. 28. with 31.
[c] Rom. vii. 1—6. with 7. [d] Rom. viii. 3. with ix. 1—5.

I. What it was that the Apostle desired in their behalf—

St. Paul had no wish to proselyte men to a party, or to procure followers to himself—

His object was to "save" them—

[Salvation comprehends not only a deliverance from all the penal effects of sin, but a restoration to the favour and image of God, and an exaltation to all the glory and felicity of heaven — — —

This is the greatest of all blessings. The concerns of time and sense are of no value in comparison of it: yea, crowns, kingdoms, worlds, are lighter than vanity itself — — — *It is a blessing which all equally stand in need of.* There is no man that is not a sinner before God, and therefore no man that is not exposed to his everlasting displeasure. Though men may differ with respect to the degrees of their guilt, there is no difference whatever with respect to their liableness to the wrath of God, and their need of his saving mercy — — — *It is a blessing, without which existence itself will prove a curse.* If those who did not partake of it could be annihilated, or if there were a purgatory, where those who die unprepared for it may be rendered fit to enjoy it, we might account our present life a blessing. But there are two states, in the one or other of which all must be fixed for ever: and they who enjoy not the felicity of heaven, must endure for ever the miseries of hell. Let us consider for a moment what those miseries are, and we shall need nothing more to shew us the value of salvation — — —]

This object lay near his heart, and called forth his most earnest exertions—

[He was not contented to obtain salvation himself: he was anxious for the welfare of his fellow-creatures, and laid to heart their interests, as though they were his own — — — Nor did he rest satisfied with good wishes and desires: he laboured with incredible assiduity and self-denial, suffering all things cheerfully, not excepting imprisonments and death itself, for the advancement of their happiness[a] — — — In secret also did he "labour fervently for them in prayer night and day." He knew the efficacy of intercession; and therefore besought God, with strong crying and tears, to take the veil from their hearts, and to enlighten them with the saving knowledge of his truth — — —]

For our own information, it will be proper to inquire,

[a] 2 Cor. xi. 23—29. 2 Tim. ii. 10.

II. In what way he directed them to seek it—

The whole Epistle to the Romans was written with the express view of setting forth the way of salvation. It shews at large that we are fallen and ruined creatures; that God has sent his only-begotten Son into the world to redeem us; and that all who would be saved, must seek for mercy through his meritorious blood and righteousness. But in a more peculiar and emphatical manner did he urge these truths in that part from whence our text is taken.

He shewed them that they must found all their hopes on Christ alone—

[Consult *the preceding context.* There he states a matter of fact well known to all; namely, that the idolatrous and abandoned Gentiles, who had never thought about salvation, had been prevailed upon to seek after it, and had actually attained it, because they were willing to accept it in God's appointed way, by faith in Christ alone: whereas the Jews, who had shewn considerable attention to the concerns of their souls, had failed of attaining salvation, because they disdained to seek it in this way. He tells them, that this fact agreed with the prophecies, which actually foretold this very event, and declared (many hundred years before) that Christ would thus become a stumbling-block to that self-righteous people[f].

The same he sets forth also in *the following context.* He confesses that his Jewish brethren had a zeal to serve God; but it was a mistaken zeal. In three things they fatally erred: they were ignorant of the plan which God had devised for justifying sinners—they were seeking to establish a righteousness of their own, by which they might be justified before him—and when a better righteousness was proposed to them, even the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, they would not trust in it, or submit to be saved in such an humiliating way—That these were errors, even the law itself might teach them; for "Christ was the end of the law for righteousness:" He was the very object to whom both the ceremonial and moral law directed them, for the obtaining of such a righteousness as should justify them before God: and this righteousness they were to obtain by faith in him. The *moral* law shut them up to this method of obtaining salvation, because it denounced nothing but curses against every one that had violated it even in a single instance[g]: and the *ceremonial* law taught them to

[f] Rom. ix. 30—33. [g] Gal. iii. 10, 23, 24.

look to that Great Sacrifice which Christ was in due time to offer for the sins of the whole world[h].

Thus plainly did he direct them unto Christ, as their only, and all-sufficient Saviour.]

In pointing them thus to Christ, he did most effectually consult their everlasting welfare—

[The way of salvation by faith in Christ is *plain*, *suitable*, *safe*, and *glorious*. Nothing can be more *plain*. Suppose a person about to be imprisoned for debt has that debt discharged by a surety; he will see as clear as the light what is the true ground of his deliverance. Such then is the deliverance which we have by Christ — — — And this way of salvation is *suitable*. If you were to propose any other method whatever, it would be altogether unsuitable for fallen man — — — but this is suited to the greatest of sinners; and that too even in their dying hour — — — How *safe* it is, must appear to all who consider that Christ is God equal with the Father; that he assumed our nature, and died upon the cross, on purpose to make atonement for us; and that the promise and oath of Jehovah are pledged for the acceptance of all who truly believe in Christ — — — And *glorious* will it be found to all eternity, inasmuch as all the perfections of the Deity are honoured by it, and the happiness of all that shall be saved is enhanced by it beyond all calculation or conception — — —]

ADDRESS—

1. Those who are careless about their souls—

[We are bound to desire and pray for your salvation: and we hope that in some small measure we can adopt respecting you the language of the text. But you must desire salvation, and pray to God for it yourselves; or else it will be in vain ever to expect it. We appeal to you, Whether God *will* or *can* bestow it upon those who are too proud to ask for it, and too thoughtless to desire it?]

2. Those who are seeking salvation, but in a mistaken way—

[Do not think it sufficient that you desire to be saved; or that you are zealous in seeking after salvation. The Jews were not only zealous in their way, but confident that they were right; and yet never attained the object of their pursuit. Remember, you *must* be humbled; you *must* be contrite; you *must* rely on Christ alone — — —]

3. Those who have obtained mercy of the Lord—

[h] ver. 2—4

[While we desire, and pray to God for, the salvation of others, we rejoice and bless our God for you. We consider the prosperity of your souls as the richest recompence of our labours. Ye have "received Christ Jesus the Lord:" see to it then that ye "walk in him," and "abide in him," and "cleave unto him with full purpose of heart."]

MDCCCLXXXIX.

CHRIST THE END OF THE LAW FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Rom. x. 4. *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*

ZEAL, if directed to a good object, is highly commendable: as the Apostle says, "It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing." In reference to the concerns of religion, it is indispensably necessary for all who would approve themselves to God: "Whatever our hand findeth to do, we should do it with our might." But in proportion to its value when operating in a good cause, is the danger of it, when engaged on the side of error. This appears from the havoc which Paul in his unconverted state made of the Christian Church; purely from a desire to render, as he thought, an acceptable service to the Lord. Such, alas! is yet the zeal of too many: it is well-intentioned, but blind, and ignorant, and injurious: nevertheless, such a zeal, conscientiously exercised, at all times deserves respect, and should be treated with respect even by those who suffer from it. The conduct of the Apostle towards the unbelieving Jews was, in this point of view, worthy of universal imitation. He was constrained to tell them that they were in error, and that their error was replete with danger to their souls: but he told them of it in terms as conciliatory as love could dictate, or language could afford. He assured them, that they were objects of his tenderest regard, and that he felt the deepest anxiety for their welfare. He even bare testimony in their behalf, that, in the zeal they manifested, they had an unfeigned desire to serve God:

but unhappily they were mistaken in their views of the Mosaic law, which was never intended to afford them a justifying righteousness, but was designed rather to lead them to that very Jesus whom they so hated and despised, and who was indeed "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

The information here given to them is of vital importance to every child of man. To place it in a just point of view, we propose to shew,

I. What is that righteousness which God has provided for fallen man—

In the verse preceding our text, mention is twice made of "the righteousness of God;" by which expression we are *not* to understand *that attribute of the Deity which we call righteousness,* but *that way of obtaining righteousness and salvation which God has provided for sinful men.* In this sense the expression is used in other parts of this epistle, especially in the third chapter; where it is said, "The righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God which is unto all, and upon all, them that believe[a]." But,

What kind of righteousness is this?

[However much God may graciously desire the salvation of men, we cannot for a moment imagine, that for the attainment of it he will disregard the claims, and violate the rights, of justice, or holiness, or truth. We may be sure, that, if he has provided a righteousness for man, that righteousness will be found consistent with all his perfections, and with the honour of his moral government. How such a righteousness could be devised, was far beyond the reach of finite wisdom to conceive: but God's wisdom is infinite; and he has, by the substitution of his own Son in the place of sinners, provided precisely such a righteousness as was worthy of God, and suited to the necessities of man. The law required obedience, and denounced death as the penalty of one single transgression. Man transgressed its commands, and became obnoxious to its curse. Before he could be restored to the favour of his God, the penalty must be inflicted, and the obedience paid. But this

[a] Rom. iii. 21, 22.

it was impossible for man to do, seeing that the penalty was everlasting death; and man was despoiled of all power to do the will of God. Therefore God was pleased to send his co-equal, co-eternal Son into the world, that, as man's substitute, he might endure the curse which we had merited, and render the obedience which we owed. Thus, by this wonderful contrivance, every obstacle to man's salvation is removed. Must the penalty denounced against sin be inflicted? It has been inflicted on God's only dear Son. Must the law be fulfilled in all its extent? It has been fulfilled to the uttermost by him. So that to those who have him for their surety, there is a plea in arrest of judgment; a plea, which God himself will admit, as just, and adequate, and perfectly consistent with his own honour.]

And where shall we find this righteousness?

[It is treasured up for us in Christ Jesus; who, having been sent into the world, "to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness[b]," executed the work assigned him: and, being now constituted the Head of his Church, and having all fulness of spiritual blessings treasured up in him for our use, he imparts this righteousness to every one who truly believes in him. Indeed, he is himself made righteousness unto them; as St. Paul has said, "He is of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness[c]." This shews how we are to understand that declaration of the Prophet Jeremiah, "This is the name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS[d]." We are not merely to compliment our Saviour with this title, but really and truly to rely upon him in this particular view, as possessing in himself all that righteousness whereby we are to be justified, and as imparting it to all, who are united to him by faith. In a word, we must all "look unto him in order to obtain salvation," and, with an express recollection, that all which we have is not in ourselves, but in him, "we must say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength[e]."]

What an agreement there is between the Old and the New Testament in relation to this righteousness, will appear, whilst we shew,

II. How the law itself directs us to it—

Had the Jews understood the true import of their own law, they would never have rejected Christ: for he was the very scope and end,

[b] Dan. ix. 24. [c] 1 Cor. i. 30.
[d] Jer. xxiii. 6. [e] Isai. xlv. 22, 24.

1. Of the moral law—

[The law, when given to man in innocence, was intended to justify him, if he should continue to obey it to the termination of the period destined for his probation. But when once he had fallen, there was no possibility of his ever obtaining justification by it. We, as partakers of his guilt and corruption, are in the same predicament with him: "in him we have died;" and, if ever we obtain life, we must seek it in the way pointed out to him, even in that "Seed of the woman that was in due time to bruise the serpent's head." St. Paul tells us, that, "if there had been a law given, which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law[f]." But this being impossible, (since man in his fallen state could not fulfil it, nor could God, consistently with his own holiness, relax its demands,) God re-published it from Mount Sinai, to shew unto men how greatly they had departed from it, and to drive them by its terrors to that Refuge which he had prepared for them. That these were the true ends for which the law was given, is expressly asserted: St. Paul puts the question, "Wherefore then serveth the law?" And he answers it by saying, that "it was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made." It was given to convince them of their transgressions, to stop their mouths with a sense of their guilt and misery[g]; and to "shut them up unto the faith that should afterwards be revealed." In a word, instead of ever being given to afford a ground of hope to men by their obedience to it, it was intended "to be *a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith*[h]." How it effected this, may be seen in the Apostle Paul, whose hopes it utterly destroyed, and whom it constrained to seek acceptance through Christ alone[i].]

2. Of the ceremonial law—

[This, it is true, was appointed to make an atonement for sins, so far as to screen the transgressor from the penalties that were to be inflicted by the civil magistrate. But it never really took away sin: "it was not possible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sins[k]." The annual repetition of the same sacrifices shewed, that "they could not make a man perfect as pertaining to the conscience:" they were, in fact, only "remembrances of sins made every year," in order to direct men to that Great Sacrifice, which should in due time be offered, and which alone could effect reconciliation for us with our offended God[l]. The very circumstance of the

[f] Gal. iii. 21. [g] Gal. iii. 19. with Rom. iii. 19, 20.
[h] Gal. iii. 22—24. [i] Rom. vii. 9. [k] Heb. x. 4.
[l] Heb. ix. 9, 10. and x. 3, 4.

ceremonial law making no provision for the expiation of presumptuous sin, shewed that it could not answer the necessities of fallen man[m]. Hence the Apostle tells us, that the law was only a "shadow of good things to come[n];" a shadow, of which Christ was the body[o]. Agreeably to this, the most noted types of Christ are expressly applied to him, as having in his own person fulfilled their office, and abrogated their use. The paschal lamb proclaimed to Israel, that unless their houses were sprinkled with its blood, they would fall by the sword of the destroying angel: and St. Paul says to us, that "Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us[p]." Again, the lamb offered every morning and evening in sacrifice, we are told, shadowed forth the Lord Jesus Christ, as the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world[q]," even that "Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world[r]." In a word, all the sacrifices proclaim to us this truth, that "without shedding of blood there is no remission."

Thus it appears, that neither the moral nor ceremonial law could provide us with any righteousness wherein we might stand before God; but that both the one and the other directed us to Christ, "in whom alone all the seed of Israel can be justified, and in whom alone they must glory[s]."]

But it remains yet to be inquired,

III. In what way we are to be made partakers of it—

In reference to this there exist amongst us, even as among the Jews, the most fatal mistakes.

The great mass of those who feel a concern about their souls, seek for righteousness by the works of the law—

[As for those who really think that their own works have such an exalted merit in them, as to deserve heaven of themselves without any reference whatever to Christ, we would fondly hope, that they are very rarely to be found amongst us. But there are two ways in which men, whilst they profess some reliance upon Christ, do in reality make their own works the foundation of their hopes; namely, by looking for salvation *by their works for Christ's sake*, or *by Christ for their works' sake*. There are a great many shades of difference between persons who may be arranged under these two heads, and many nice distinctions have been drawn in order to shew the various delusions which men harbour in their minds in reference to this

[m] Num. xv. 30. [n] Heb. x. 1. [o] Col. ii. 17.
[p] 1 Cor. v. 7. [q] Rev. xiii. 8. [r] John i. 29.
[s] Isai. xlv. 25.

subject: but all the different classes may be safely reduced to these two.

Let us pause a moment, to consider whether we ourselves do not belong to the one or other of them.

There are many who, as we have said, seek salvation *by their works for Christ's sake.* They will not go so far as to say, that Christ has done nothing for man's salvation: on the contrary, they think that they are much indebted to him; for that to him they owe it, that their imperfect obedience shall be accepted for their justification before God. They do indeed suppose that their repentance, their reformation of life, their alms-deeds, and their attendance on divine ordinances, will procure to them the favour of God: but then it is not because these things are absolutely meritorious, so as to deserve and purchase heaven; but because the Lord Jesus Christ has procured a relaxation of the perfect law of God, and obtained for them that their sincere obedience shall be accepted instead of perfect obedience. And, if their obedience should not be altogether sufficient for the desired end, they expect he will add a portion of his merits to theirs, so that there shall be no deficiency upon the whole.

But a very little knowledge of God's perfect law is sufficient to dispel this fatal delusion. The law neither is mitigated, nor can be mitigated: it never can require less than it did. It required of man to love God with all his heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, and to love his neighbour as himself. But from which of these has God released us? or from which, consistently with his own honour, can he release us? The law remains the same as ever it was, both in its requirements and its penalties: and, as our works never did, nor ever can, come up to its demands, it can never do any thing but denounce a curse against us, as long as we continue under it: as the Apostle says, "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse;" for it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them[t]." Whilst therefore it curses us, it of course can never justify: nor can our defective obedience to it form any part of our justifying righteousness before God.

When men are driven from this refuge, they then flee to the other, of which we have spoken, and look for justification *by Christ for their works' sake.* They see that in Christ alone can be found such a righteousness as the law requires; and they now look to him as their righteousness. But yet they dare not go to him, as it were, with all their sins upon them; they think they must wash themselves first with the tears of penitence, and make some compensation for their past iniquities

[t] Gal. iii. 10.

by newness of life: and then they hope that he will accept them, and present them faultless before his heavenly Father. And if they cannot see in themselves such a measure of penitence and reformation as they think necessary to recommend them to him, they dare not go to him: they think it would be presumption in them to trust in him: they cannot conceive how his mercy should extend to such wretches as they see themselves to be. On the other hand, if by much prayer and diligence they have attained some measure of the goodness which they are striving after, then, I say, they can go to him with courage, and feel a comfortable persuasion that he will accept them. Thus they found their hopes, not simply on his merits, but on some measure of goodness in themselves, which they carry with them as a price to purchase his favour. But the Scriptures tell us, that we must go to receive salvation at Christ's hands, "without money and without price[u]:" that salvation must be wholly of grace, from first to last[x]: that we must go *without any work whatever*, to be "justified by him *as ungodly*[y]:" and that, if we attempt to carry to him any thing of our own, either as *a joint ground of our hope*, or as *a warrant for our hope*, in him, "he shall profit us nothing[z]."]

But we must be made partakers of Christ's righteousness solely and entirely by faith—

[This is asserted so strongly, and so frequently, that one can scarcely conceive how any one who has ever read the Scriptures should entertain a doubt of it. Nor is it asserted only, but maintained frequently, in a long course of argument in direct opposition to the Jewish notion of salvation by works[a]. The reasons for it also are stated again and again. Salvation "is by faith, that it may be by grace[b]." It is "by faith, lest any man should boast[c]." It is by faith, that the whole universe may glory in Christ alone[d]. But the reproof which Paul gave to Peter at Antioch puts this matter in the clearest light. Peter had preached to the Gentiles, salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Some Judaizing teachers, who, whilst they professed to believe in Christ, were zealous for the observance of the Mosaic law, coming thither, he feared to offend them; and, to ingratiate himself with them, he required the Gentiles to conform to some Mosaic rites to which they had never before been subjected, and from which the Jews themselves, had they known their liberty, were free. We are not told that Peter promised them salvation by these works: but he evidently taught them, that, though Christ was

[u] Isai. lv. 1. [x] Rom. xi. 6. [y] Rom. iv. 5.
[z] Gal. v. 2, 4. [a] Rom. iv. 1—14. [b] Rom. iv. 16.
[c] Eph. ii. 8, 9. [d] 1 Cor. i. 31.

the only Saviour, they might recommend themselves to him, and confirm their interest in him, by the observance of these rites. Thus, in fact, he adulterated and undermined the Gospel, and endangered the eternal welfare of all his followers. On this account St. Paul blamed and reproved him before the whole Church: and the reprehension which he gave to Peter has been transmitted to us, that we may see of what importance it is to maintain the doctrine of salvation by faith, uncontaminated and undisguised. Hear the account which Paul himself gives of it: "When I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified[o]." This shews us, that nothing is to be blended with, and nothing to be added to, the faith of Christ; but that all who are justified, must be justified simply, and solely, by faith in Christ.

We must not be understood to say, that good works are not necessary *after* we are justified; for they are indispensably necessary, to prove the sincerity of our faith: but it is in reference to the matter of justification only that we now speak: and there they must be excluded altogether. Christ is our only righteousness: and it is by faith only that we can ever apprehend him.]

The whole state of the Apostle's argument in the passage before us, leads us to conclude with the following ADVICE:

1. Seek not to establish any righteousness of your own—

[Self-righteousness is deeply rooted in the heart of man. Its workings are numerous and subtle: and the danger arising from it is more than can be conceived. It robs God of his glory: it subverts the very foundations of the Gospel: it usurps the office of the Saviour: it invades the unalienable prerogatives of God. Do not think it a light sin. Do not hastily conclude that you are free from it. Search and try your hearts: see what is the ground of your hopes: see whether you are willing to go to Christ as the very chief of sinners; or

[o] Gal. ii. 14—16.

whether you are not rather wishing to find some worthiness in yourselves, that may serve as a ground of confidence in your approaches to him, and as a foundation of your hope of acceptance with him. For be assured, that if you stumble at this stumbling-stone, you will frustrate the grace of God, and cause the death of Christ, as far as respects yourselves, to be in vain[f].]

2. Submit humbly and cheerfully to the righteousness of Christ—

[Strange indeed is it that it should be any act of submission to believe in Christ: but it is in reality such a submission as our proud hearts are never brought to without much difficulty. We may see how a spirit of pride wrought in Naaman, when he was told by the prophet to "wash in Jordan, and be clean." Had he been told to do some great thing, he would have complied immediately: but to "wash in Jordan" appeared to be so inadequate a remedy, that he would not condescend to try it. Thus, when we say to men, "Believe, and be saved," we seem to propose to them a remedy of no value. Were we to lay down rules for them, and tell them what penances to inflict on themselves, and what services to perform in order to the purchasing of heaven, we should find them willing to undertake whatever we might prescribe. The very thought of being their own saviours would suffice to carry them through the greatest difficulties. But when we say to them, "Believe only, and ye shall be saved," they are ready, like Naaman, to "turn away in a rage." This however is what we are commissioned to say: and, if an angel from heaven were to give you any direction contrary to that, he would be accursed[g]. O let your hearts be humbled before God. Methinks, when Jesus said to the lepers, "Go and shew yourselves to the priests;" or, when to the blind man, "Go and wash in the pool of Siloam," they found no reluctance to comply. Why then should you? Can you cleanse your own leprosy? Can you open your own eyes? Can you effect your own salvation? No assuredly, you cannot. If any man could have saved himself, methinks it was the Apostle Paul. But he, disclaiming all thoughts of ever accomplishing such a work, "desired to be found in Christ, *not having his own righteousness*, but *the righteousness which is of God by faith in Christ*[h]." Be ye, brethren, like-minded with him; and then you may, like him, be "always triumphing in Christ," and be assured, that, "when Christ, who is your life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory[i]."]

[f] Gal. ii. 21. [g] Gal. i. 8, 9. [h] Phil. iii. 9. [i] Col. iii. 4

MDCCCXC.

GOSPEL SALVATION.

Rom. x. 8—10. *That is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

IF we would know with certainty what the Gospel is, we should examine carefully what the Apostles preached. But in various places their discourses appeared to have a different aspect, according as they were called to lay the foundations of religion, or to build up the superstructure: and therefore we are concerned to receive from these inspired teachers a summary of their own doctrines: and this is precisely what we are favoured with in the passage before us. Let us, then, take these words as our guide: for in them we may clearly see,

I. The terms on which salvation is offered to us—

We are told, in few words, what was "the word of faith which Paul preached." Two things he insisted on, as indispensably necessary to our salvation:

1. Faith in Christ as our crucified and risen Saviour—

[The Lord Jesus Christ was "sent of God to be the Saviour of the world[a]." All that was necessary for man's salvation he effected on the cross: and God, in token that he himself was satisfied, raised the Lord Jesus from the dead, and exalted him to his own right hand, that there he might carry on and perfect the work assigned him. Of us he requires, that we believe in Christ, as thus sent, thus accepted, thus qualified: and that, discarding every other hope, we place our dependence on him alone.

This mode of salvation is contrasted with the law, which proposes obedience alone as the ground of hope. But by obedience can no man living be saved; because we have already violated the law; and, even if at this moment our past violations of it were forgiven, we should be unable to render to

[a] 1 John iv. 14.

it the obedience it demands. That ground of hope, therefore, being renounced, we must rely simply on the Lord Jesus Christ, and seek salvation altogether by faith in him.]

2. A public confession of him under that character—

[No confession of ours can add any thing to his all-finished work. Yet are we required to confess him openly; because his glory, and the good of man, demand it of us. If we should conceal our faith in him, who would be benefited? or in what respect would he be glorified? Methinks such concealment would reflect on him the greatest disgrace; and it would assuredly tend to harden others in their unbelief. Hence our blessed Lord required, that "all who would derive benefit from him, should deny themselves, and take up their cross daily, and follow him." And if we do not this, he declares that he will not acknowledge us as his disciples. Our faith, destitute of this fruit, will be in vain. Thus, though confession cannot add to faith, it is equally necessary with faith; the one being the root; the other, the fruit proceeding from it — — —]

For our encouragement, we are informed what will be,

II. The certain issue of a compliance with those terms—

Whosoever shall thus believe in Christ, and thus confess him, "*shall be saved.*" This expression is plain, positive, unqualified. But we are informed in our text what will be the bearing of each requirement, and in what respect a compliance with each will tend to the attainment of the end proposed. To each of them has the Lord Jesus Christ assigned its proper office:

Faith will invest us with his "righteousness"—

[He has wrought out a righteousness for sinful man; a righteousness fully commensurate with the utmost demands of law and justice[b]. This righteousness faith apprehends. In truth, it cannot be apprehended in any other way. If we were able to purchase an interest in it by any works of our own, salvation would in fact be by works; seeing that to purchase salvation, or to purchase that which gives us salvation, is, in reality, and in effect, the same. We are continually told, that this righteousness becomes ours by faith: "It is revealed from

[b] ver. 4.

faith to faith[c]:" and "it is unto all, and upon all, them that believe[d]." From the moment that any one believes in Christ, this righteousness becomes his; yea, "Christ is made unto him righteousness[e];" and he is entitled to call the Lord Jesus, "Jehovah our Righteousness[f];" and to say, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength[g]." Arrayed in this spotless robe, he will be so pure, that the eye of God himself will not discern a spot or blemish in him[h].]

Confession will insure to us his final approbation—

[True, it will add nothing to Christ's perfect righteousness: but it will evince the sincerity of our faith: and on it will the very sentence of our Saviour's approbation be grounded, as displaying, beyond a doubt, the equity of his procedure. Our Lord has said, that on this shall his ultimate proceedings with us depend: "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven[i]." Nor is this a mere arbitrary appointment: for the confessing of Christ openly has a great tendency to improve our character, and to prepare us for his glory. Doubtless it will be an occasion of many trials and many sufferings: for the ungodly world will hate the servants even as they hated the Master, and persecute them even as they persecuted him. But "he was made perfect through sufferings[k]:" and by the fire of affliction must we also be purged from our dross[l]. Our afflictions are but, in fact, the completing of that which was yet lacking in his[m]: and, in enduring them, we are assimilated to his image[n]. Thus, though our confession of him adds not any thing to his perfect righteousness, it tends to fit us for the recompence which his overflowing bounty will accord to us. Assuredly, therefore, we may expect, that "if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him," and to all eternity "be glorified together[o]."]

Let, then, your faith in Christ be cordial—

[It is not to be a mere assent of the understanding, but an acquiescence of the heart. Twice is this mentioned in our text: nor is it possible for us to lay too great a stress upon it. In point of strength, I doubt not but that the faith of devils is superior to that of men: but they have no love to Christ, nor any delight in any thing relating to him. But ye, beloved, must see a glory in the whole of his mediation, and must feel

[c] Rom. i. 17. [d] Rom. iii. 22. [e] 1 Cor. i. 30.
[f] Jer. xxiii. 6. [g] Isai. xlv. 24. [h] Eph. v. 27.
[i] Matt. x. 32, 33. [k] Heb. ii. 10. [l] 1 Pet. i. 6, 7.
[m] Col. i. 24. [n] 1 Pet. iv. 13.
[o] 2 Tim. ii. 12. Rom. viii. 17.

exquisite delight in committing yourselves altogether to him. Nor must this be an occasional act, but the daily habit of your minds: "The entire life which you now live in the flesh, you must live by the faith of the Son of God, who has loved you, and given himself for you[p]." Nor must there be in you the least bearing towards any righteousness of your own. You must indeed endeavour to be "righteous even as he is righteous[q]:" but your dependence must be on him alone.]

2. Let your confession of him be uniform and unreserved—

[Never, for a moment, should you give way to fear[r], or suffer any carnal consideration to influence your minds, so as to damp your zeal in his service[s]. It is not necessary that you should be obtrusive, and force religious subjects on those who are utterly averse to them: *this* would be to "cast pearls before swine." But you should watch for opportunities to honour the Saviour, and to lead others to the knowledge of him. And on no account should you ever be "ashamed of him[t]:" but should be ready, at all times, to "follow him without the camp, bearing his reproach[u]. If you possessed, like Moses, all the treasures of Egypt, you should consider them as of no account in comparison of the infinitely richer treasure which you will find in "the reproach of Christ[x]." If only "Christ may be magnified in you," it should be equally a welcome service to you, "whether it be by life or by death[y]."]

[p] Gal. ii. 20. [q] 1 John iii. 7. [r] Luke xii. 4, 5.
[s] John xii. 42, 43. [t] Mark viii. 38. [u] Heb. xiii. 13.
[x] Heb. xi. 24—26. [y] Phil. i. 20.

MDCCCXCI.

SALVATION BY CHRIST UNIVERSALLY TO BE PROCLAIMED.

Rom. x. 12—15. *There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*

MEN, as sinners, need to be reminded from day to day, that there is a Saviour provided for them, and

that the salvation wrought out by him, is offered freely to every child of man. To declare this is the special work of the ministry; which is therefore called, The ministry of reconciliation, because the end and object of it is to proclaim this truth, "that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." In delivering this message, we sometimes appear to ourselves as in danger of wearying our audience by needless repetitions; but we check ourselves when we hear St. Paul apologizing for the same conduct in these words; "To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous; but for you it is safe." We might diversify our subjects more, and thereby administer to the gratification of "itching ears:" but there is no subject in the universe of such vital importance as this; and therefore we most approve ourselves faithful to our high calling, when, like Paul, "we know nothing among you but Christ, and him crucified."

St. Paul, in all the preceding context, has shewn, that salvation is simply by faith in Christ: and that, in publishing it equally both to Jews and Gentiles, he had only done what Moses and the prophets had done before him; and what must be done, if ever either Jews or Gentiles are to be made partakers of it.

The words which we have read will naturally lead us to set before you,

I. The way of salvation—

There is but one way of salvation for all mankind—

[As soon as ever sin entered into the world, the way of salvation by the works of the law was closed. From that day to this, "the flaming sword, once placed at the east of Eden, has prohibited all access to the tree of life," except that which was opened in the promise, that "the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head[a]." From that time, this way of salvation was shadowed forth in sacrifices, with the skins of which our first parents were clothed, to remind them, that they must be clothed in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, which alone could cover the shame of their nakedness

[a] Gen. iii. 15, 24.

from the eye of their offended God[b]. The prophets all bare testimony to this same truth: Isaiah speaks of Jesus as that "foundation which God has laid in Zion, and declares that whosoever believeth in him shall not be ashamed[c]:" and Joel, in the words quoted in our text, affirms, that "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved[d]."

These words deserve somewhat more of a distinct consideration. They refer beyond all doubt to the Messiah, and to the dispensation which he was to introduce. All the preceding context indisputably proves this[e]; and St. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, expressly declares that they were fulfilled by the descent of the Holy Ghost to testify of Christ, and to convert souls to him[f]. But in the prophet Joel the person on whose name we are taught to call, is JEHOVAH: it is no subordinate Lord, but JEHOVAH himself: from whence we know assuredly, that the Lord Jesus Christ, who is there spoken of, is "Emmanuel, GOD with us." O blessed truth! He who was "a Child born, a Son given, is the Mighty God," "God manifest in the flesh," "God over all, blessed for evermore[g]." HIM we are to invoke, and on him we are to rely, as "The Lord our righteousness:" and, if we do so in sincerity and truth, renouncing every other hope, we shall be saved: his righteousness shall justify us; his Spirit shall renew us; and his grace shall keep us even to the end; "In him we shall be saved with an everlasting salvation; we shall not be ashamed or confounded world without end[h]."]

This salvation is equally free for all—

["There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek." This way of salvation existed before there was a Jew in the world: and the only advantage which the Jews enjoyed, was, that this way of salvation was made known to them in types and shadows, when it was altogether forgotten by the world at large. This distinguishing mercy, however, made no difference as to the way in which they were to be saved: it afforded no new ground of hope to the Jew; it took not away any old ground of hope from the Gentile. If a Gentile, like Job or Melchizedec, looked to the Great Sacrifice that was in due time to be offered, he was saved by it, though he did not descend from the loins of Abraham: and, in like manner, now, every creature in the universe who shall believe in Jesus, shall be saved by him: for "this same Lord over all (the Lord Jesus[i]) is rich unto *all* that call upon him:" there is no limita-

[b] Gen. iii. 21. with Rom. iii. 22. and Rev. iii. 18.
[c] Isai. xxviii. 16. [d] Joel ii. 32. [e] Joel ii. 28—31.
[f] Acts ii. 16—21. [g] Isai. ix. 6. 1 Tim. iii. 16. Rom. ix. 5.
[h] Isai. xlv. 17. [i] Acts x. 36.

tion, no exception whatever; for, "*whosoever* shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved."

Behold then in few words the way of salvation. The Lord Jesus Christ, who bare our sins in his own body on the tree, and "made reconciliation for us by the blood of his cross," is the one object of our faith and hope: and all who with humility and earnestness call upon him for salvation, shall surely find it, both in time and eternity.]

This salvation being designed for all, we cannot doubt,

II. The duty of diffusing universally the knowledge of it—

Without the instrumentality of human agents, it cannot be hoped that the knowledge of salvation should be spread throughout the earth—

[Doubtless God, if he pleased, might, as in the first creation, speak the word only, and there should be spiritual light throughout all the dark regions of the earth. But this is not the way in which God has ever wrought to any great extent; nor has he given us reason to expect that he ever will work in this way, for the conversion of those who are yet in darkness and the shadow of death. He has sent forth an order of men on purpose to preach his Gospel throughout the world. The Jews indeed could not endure this dispensation: they condemned with most inveterate malignity the Apostle's conduct in preaching to the Gentiles: but he asks them in our text, How the Gentiles ever could attain the knowledge of salvation, if it were not preached to them? The Apostle's argument is this: Ye Jews, know from your own prophets, that salvation is confined to those "who call on the name of the Lord." I by inspiration know, that that Lord is the Lord Jesus Christ. And now I ask, "How can the heathen call on him of whom they have not heard? or how can they hear without a preacher?" This argument is incontrovertible: and we appeal to it as a complete vindication of all the efforts that are made by different societies to diffuse the knowledge of salvation throughout the world.]

It is by this instrumentality that God himself has taught us to expect the wished-for event—

[The words cited from the Prophet Isaiah are undoubtedly to be understood in reference to the Gospel dispensation. They primarily indeed describe the joy occasioned among the captive Jews in Babylon, when they saw the messenger hastening over the distant hills to bring them certain tidings of their redemption; but all the following context shews, that they refer to an

event in which the whole world was interested, "seeing that "God had made bare his arm in the eyes of all nations, and that all the ends of the earth were to see the salvation of God[k]."

Contemplate then the passage in this view. See the messenger of the Lord of Hosts running over the mountains to proclaim salvation to a ruined world. Those who are unconscious of any bondage, may deride his folly for giving himself so much unnecessary trouble. But how would it be with those who saw themselves under a sentence of condemnation, and were expecting the executioner to inflict the judgment denounced against them? Would they not behold with interest his every step? Would not his every motion, as it were, appear lovely in their eyes? Would not the tidings produce on all who believed them, the effect once wrought on the liberated Grecians, who all night long rent the air with that cheering sound, "A Saviour, a Saviour?" Look at the converts on the day of Pentecost; and know assuredly, that if, like Peter, we will unite in extending the knowledge of the Gospel, thousands shall in due time arise to attest, and to rejoice in, the tidings we proclaim. Yes, "the Gospel of peace" will be received by them as "*glad tidings of good things.*"]

Now, in CONCLUSION, we will call upon you,

1. To perform your duty—

[Let no Jewish prejudices or heathen infidelity (both of which, alas! are but too prevalent amongst us) discourage you. You must expect, not only that they who feel no value for their own souls will frown at your attempts to convert the souls of others, but that persons who really mean well, yea, and some who are truly pious, may, on some account or other, not be able cordially to unite with you in the blessed work. But know, that the salvation of mankind is a work which every redeemed soul should labour to promote. We would not overlook indeed the things of minor importance: but we would not suffer them to stand in the way of such a work as this. What had become of the whole Gentile world, if the Apostles had waited till their unbelieving brethren, or even the Judaizing Christians, had given their consent to have a free salvation offered to the Gentile world? Alas! we had been in darkness even until now. Labour then, beloved brethren, in every possible way to promote the knowledge of salvation among both Jews and Gentiles, yea, and among those who, though they call themselves Christians, are so only in name and profession. Circulate the Scriptures in every language under heaven: send missionaries to the ends of the earth; seek also to bring into the fold of Christ the lost sheep of the house of

[k] Isai. lii. 7, 10.

Israel: and whatever be the office to which your situation and circumstances appear to fit you, be ready to execute it: and, in answer to God's inquiry, "Who will go for us?" be ready to reply, "Here am I, Lord; send me."]

2. To enjoy your privileges—

[All the blessings of salvation, if only you believe in Christ, are yours: yours is that peace of God which passeth all understanding: yours are all the treasures both of grace and glory; holiness is yours, as well as pardon; for the faith that brings you into a state of peace with God will "work by love," and "purify the heart." Ye are not straitened in your God: be not straitened in your own souls. Ask much; expect much; for your "Lord is rich unto all who call upon him." Set not limits, either to the objects of his bounty, or the riches of his grace; for his riches are unsearchable; and they are promised indiscriminately to all who call upon him. What a blessed word is that, "*Whosoever!*" Here is no limitation, no exception: all that is required of us is, to believe in Christ, and to call upon him. O! call upon him day and night; be earnest; be importunate; wrestle with him, as Jacob did; and let him not go, until you have received his blessing. Well I know how unbelief is apt to interpose between him and your souls. You will be ready perhaps to say, "True; but I fear I do not call aright." Ah! brethren, this is a device of the enemy to rob you of the blessings which Christ is ready to bestow. If you call not on him as you would, still call upon him as you can: lie at the foot of his cross: *trust* in him: if you cannot trust, then *hope* in him: in a word, *look* unto him, renouncing every other ground of hope; and fear not but that he will make all grace abound towards you; and that what he has begun in time, he will perfect in eternity.]

MDCCCXCII.

CHRIST MADE KNOWN TO THE GENTILES.

Rom. x. 20, 21. *Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.*

IT is scarcely to be conceived to what a degree prejudice will close both the eyes and ears of men against the plainest truths. Nothing could be plainer than the avowed purpose and determination of God

to cast off the Jews in the event of their continued impenitence, and to admit the Gentiles to a participation of those privileges of which the Jews in the first instance had the exclusive enjoyment. Moses had declared it in the most direct terms; that "God would provoke the Jews to jealousy by those who were not a people, and by a foolish nation he would anger them:" the plain import of which was, that he would transfer his favours to the Gentiles, in case the Jews should continue to abuse them. But Isaiah, as my text expresses it, was very bold; affirming in a way of prophetical anticipation, that God was already found of the Gentiles, to whom his Gospel, so long slighted by the Jews, was now proclaimed[a]. Yet strong as these assertions were, the Jews could not for a moment admit the idea, that the Gentiles should be admitted to a participation of their privileges. But St. Paul assures them, that so it had been determined many centuries before, and, in fact, that so it had been done.

In discoursing on the predictions here cited, we shall consider them,

I. As prophecies fulfilled—

In them we see,

1. God's promise to the Gentiles—

[The Gentiles are here plainly designated. They "sought not God, nor asked after him" at all: they were altogether ignorant of God, and unconcerned about him. They did not regard the notices of him which were visible in all the works of his hands. They were contented to live without him in the world; and so far did they put him from them, that "he was not in all their thoughts."

Yet to these was God now made known in the person of his Son: the glad tidings of salvation had been proclaimed to them; the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon them; and Christ, in all his fulness, and in all his glory, had been revealed in their hearts. God had now been found of them, not as a Creator merely, but as a Saviour; a Father, a Friend, a Portion, "an everlasting great Reward." Though they had been in darkness and the shadow of death during all the time that God had made himself known to the Jews, yet at last

[a] See Isai. lxv. 1, 2.

"the light had risen upon them, and God's glory was seen upon them." "As soon as they heard him, they obeyed his call;" and within a few years from the publication of the Gospel to them, such multitudes became obedient to the faith, that they filled, as it were, every part of the Roman empire; so gloriously was the prediction fulfilled in the eyes of the whole world.]

2. His complaint of the Jews—

[For two thousand years had the Jews been the Lord's peculiar people, the sole depositories of his revealed will, the only visible monuments of his saving grace. During all this time had God stretched out his hands to them with more than parental tenderness and affection, intreating them to accept his overtures of mercy, and urging them not to put away from them the blessings which he of his own sovereign love had prepared for them. He had assured them, that in and through their Messiah they should possess all the blessings both of grace and glory. He had spared no pains to draw them to himself. He had wrought such miracles for them as had never been wrought for any other people from the foundation of the world. He had loaded them with benefits without number, given them his statutes, his ordinances, his Sabbaths, and sent from time to time his prophets to instruct and warn them. In short, every thing that could be done for his vineyard, he had done in it.

But how had they requited all this unbounded love? Had they turned to him? had they loved, and served, and glorified him? No: from the beginning they had been "a disobedient and gainsaying people." Hear how God complains of them by the Prophet Jeremiah[b] ——— But the most perfect contrast between his tenderness towards them and their obstinacy will be found in their treatment of Hezekiah's messengers, when he sent them through the whole land to entreat and importune them to return to God[c] ——— (Mark *the extreme tenderness* with which God here "stretches out his hands to them.") And how did they receive these gracious communications? "Hear, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth!" they "*laughed* the messengers *to scorn*, and *mocked* them." Thus did they also in the days of Christ and his Apostles; they were always "disobedient, always gainsaying" and opposing every thing that was said or done for their welfare; till at last, by their "contradictions and blasphemies," they constrained the Apostle Paul to turn from them, and to execute without any further reserve the commission he had received to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles[d] ——— With what a different spirit the

[b] Jer. xxxv. 13, 15. [c] 2 Chron. xxx. 6—9. [d] Acts xiii. 44—47.

Gentiles received these tidings was immediately made manifest: "*they* heard the Apostle with gladness, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many of them as were ordained to eternal life, believed[a]."

Thus, in reference both to Jews and Gentiles, was this prophecy clearly and undeniably fulfilled.]

But it will be proper to view these prophecies,

II. As events yet daily accomplishing—

Verily God is yet found of those who sought him not—.

[We speak not now of men's conduct *after* they have received the grace of God; for no man who has been made partaker of God's grace can possibly neglect to seek him. But the question is, Whence arose their good desires? were they of themselves, or of God? Let this be answered from our Liturgy: "O God, from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed." Yes, it is "God, who of his own good pleasure gives us both to will and to do;" or, as our article expresses it, "who worketh in us, that we may have a good will, and worketh with us when we have that good will." And here we will appeal to every humble mind, to every one that has found the Saviour in truth; What was your state when God first stirred you up to seek him? Were you not careless and unconcerned, or, at least, resting in a mere form of godliness, without any experience of its power? Did you apprehend him, before he apprehended you? Did you love him, before he loved you? Did you choose him, before he chose you? A proud Pharisee may arrogate to himself the glory, and say, that he made himself to differ: but so will not any one who is really taught of God. The true Christian will say with Paul, "It was not I, but the grace of God that was with me." Wherever there is one really united to Christ by faith, and washed in his blood, and renewed by his Spirit, there is one who will say from his inmost soul, "By the grace of God I am what I am."]

On the other hand, thousands who are sought by God with all imaginable tenderness, yet continue in a state of wilful and obstinate disobedience—

[This is the case with the generality of those who bear the name of Christ. God comes to them by his providence, his word, his Spirit, and seeks to turn them to himself; but they pull away the shoulder, and refuse to "hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely." For how many years

[a] Acts xiii. 48.

has God been striving with some amongst us, who yet continue alienated from the life of God through the blindness and hardness of their hearts! Think, in what diversified ways he has dealt with us, in order that he might fulfil in us his good pleasure, and accomplish in us the rich purposes of his grace! From the first moment that reason began to expand and operate, he began also to work upon our consciences, and to draw us by the influences of his Spirit. Say, ye who are now in the vigour of youth, or grown to man's estate, whether ye cannot call to remembrance many interpositions of the Deity, when he sought to stop you in your career of sin, and to bring you to repentance? And ye who are advanced in life, say, whether every year that has been added to your lives has not brought with it much additional ground for God's indignation against you! Behold then, the conduct of the Jews is realized and renewed in us: and the Lord Jesus Christ has reason to repeat over us the complaint once poured forth over the disobedient Jews, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered you, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings! but ye would not." Yes, at the day of judgment shall this be our condemnation, "I would; but ye would not."]

There is yet a further point of view in which these prophecies may be considered; namely,

III. As truths illustrative of the whole economy of salvation—

The Gospel is altogether a dispensation of grace—

[This is its most distinguishing feature: it is a plan devised and ordained of God for the displaying of "the exceeding riches of his grace." Every thing that God has bestowed upon fallen man in relation to it, has been unsought, and unsolicited. We may see the whole exemplified in our first parent Adam. When he fell, did he cry to God for mercy? Did he ask for a Saviour? Did he implore such measures of grace as might restore him to the Divine image? No: instead of "seeking after" God, or even asking of God whether there were any possibility of ever being restored to his favour, he fled from God, and hid himself; and, when called forth from his hiding-place, he cast the blame of his transgression on God himself. This shews us what every man by nature does, and would continue to do, if God, of his own grace and mercy, did not infuse into his mind a better disposition. Man in his fallen state is dead, "dead in trespasses and sins:" he is like the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision, till God breathes upon him, and bids him live. Nay, he would revert to that state again, if God did not uphold him every moment. In vain would be all his

past experience of redeeming love, if Christ, in whom his life is hid, were not constantly to impart more grace to him, and grace sufficient for his multiplied necessities.

Brethren, it is to this state of conscious and willing dependence upon the Lord Jesus Christ that we wish you to be brought: this is what the Apostle calls "living by faith on the Son of God." This alone answers the end of the Gospel dispensation: this alone honours God, or can bring solid peace into the soul. We pray you to seek this "spirit of faith," and to abound in it more and more ——— To the Lord Jesus Christ must you give glory from first to last: it was He who opened your heart, as he did Lydia's of old, to attend to the concerns of your souls; and He, who was "the Author of your faith, must also be the Finisher." Regard him in this view; and live upon him in this view; and give him glory in this view: and the more grateful your acknowledgments to him, the more abundant will be his communications to you, both in time and in eternity.]

But those who partake not of this grace have themselves only to blame—

[God "willeth not the death of any sinner, but rather that he come to repentance and live." He even condescends for our encouragement, to declare this upon oath: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he turn from his wickedness and live." And then he further confirms this by the kindest and most affectionate entreaties; "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Let no man think to excuse himself by saying, "If God give me not his grace, how can I help myself? For God offers his grace to every man freely: "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come to the waters; come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price!" Our blessed Lord gave a similar invitation; "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink; and out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." In like manner, in the book of Revelation it is written, "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come: and whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." What will ye say after such invitations as these? Will ye say, We *cannot?* If ye do, we will tell you, beforehand, our blessed Lord's reply, "Ye *will not* come unto me, that ye may have life."

You are to "seek him: and then he will be found of you." "Seek, and ye shall find," is a rule to *you*, though it is not to *God*. *He* may dispense his blessings to whomsoever he will, and under whatever circumstances: but *you* must seek his blessings; and, if you seek them not, you must abide the consequences. What those consequences will be, ye may judge

from the Jews. Has not God punished them at last? "Go to Shiloh, and see what he did to them there:" go to Judæa, and see how his anger has burned against them there: look at them in every quarter of the globe; and know, that, as he has scattered them, so will he fulfil his threatenings upon you: and when he shall say, "Bring hither those mine enemies, and slay them before me," ye will be silent, not having a word to say in arrest of judgment. Be prevailed on then to seek his face, yea, to seek him with your whole hearts. Take encouragement from the patience he has already exercised towards you, and "account his long-suffering to be salvation." Be assured, that at this moment he waiteth to be gracious unto you; and that if you will only be content to "go on your way weeping, bearing precious seed, ye shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you," even an everlasting harvest of felicity and glory.]

MDCCCXCIII.

THE LORD'S PEOPLE A CHOSEN REMNANT.

Rom. xi. 5. *Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.*

IT is the part both of wisdom and of love to guard our statements against misconception. We are of necessity constrained sometimes to state truth in strong and general terms: but in all such cases it becomes us to anticipate, and to remove, as much as in us lies, all occasion for misapprehension or mistake: we should make every thing so clear, that the ignorant should have nothing to ask; the captious nothing to object. St. Paul was ever alive to this duty: he foresaw and answered every objection that could be urged against the truths he maintained. He had in the preceding chapter spoken of the Gentiles as adopted into God's family, whilst the Jews, for their obstinate disobedience, were cast off. Hence it might have been supposed, that God had cast off his people altogether: but he tells them, that this was not the case; for that he himself, though a Jew, was a partaker of all the blessings of salvation: and that, as in the days of Elijah, there were among the Jews more faithful servants of Jehovah than was

supposed, so it was at that time; "there was a remnant," and a considerable remnant too, "according to the election of grace."

We will,

I. Shew that God's people are "a chosen remnant"—

The Lord has at this day a remnant of faithful people—

[In every age of the world there have been some faithful worshippers of Jehovah. Even in the antediluvian world, when all flesh had so corrupted their way that God determined to destroy them utterly, there was one pious man, who boldly protested against the reigning abominations, and, with his family, was saved from the universal deluge. Abraham, Melchizedec, and Lot, were also rare instances of piety in a degenerate age; as were also Job, and his little band of friends. In Israel too, even under the impious and tyrannic reign of Ahab, there was an Elijah, who was a bold and faithful witness for his God. Thus at this day also there are some who serve their God with fidelity and zeal. Neither the example of the multitude, nor the menaces of zealots, can induce them to bow down to Baal, or "to walk after the course of a corrupt world." "They are not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world;" "nor will they conform to it" in its spirit and conduct: they will "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but will rather reprove them." To serve, to enjoy, to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, is all their desire; and they "cleave unto him with full purpose of heart."]

They are however but a remnant—

["The world at large lieth in wickedness." The broad road that leadeth to destruction is crowded; whilst those who enter in at the strait gate, and walk in the narrow way that leadeth unto life, are few[a]. True it is, that the servants of God may now, as in Elijah's days, be more numerous than we imagine: there may be many, who, being remote from public ordinances, are unknown; or, from being poor, are unobserved; or, from peculiar diffidence, are kept from joining themselves to the Lord's people; or, from their weakness, are not yet able to encounter the opposition which they expect to meet with. We are persuaded that there are many Nicodemuses and Nathanaels at present in the shade, who yet in due time will come forth to light, and be "burning and shining lights" in their day and generation. We mean not

[a] Matt. vii. 13, 14.

by these observations to express an approbation of worldly shame, or of the fear of man: for it is the duty of every Christian to "confess Christ" boldly, and to "follow him without the camp bearing his reproach:" but so it is, that, from a variety of causes, some of the Lord's people remain unknown to us, and will be found at the last day, if not before, among the "hidden ones," that were known to God and accepted of him: and it is a comfort to think, that, as "there were seven thousand men in Israel who had not bowed their knee to Baal," whilst Elijah conceived himself to stand alone, so there may be at this day thousands in the world who, in the sight of God, are "faithful and beloved," though they have not at present any name or place in the Church of Christ. Yet, after all, in comparison of the careless and ungodly world, they will be found "a small remnant," "a little flock[b]."]

And for their distinguished privileges they are altogether indebted to the electing love of God—

[All by nature are alike "dead in trespasses and sins;" and if not quickened by divine grace, must continue dead even to the end. Look into the Scriptures, and see if you can find so much as one who raised himself to newness of life. Did the converts on the day of Pentecost? Did Paul? Did Lydia? Did any make themselves to differ, or present to him what they had not previously received from him[c]? Can you find one that did not say with St. Paul, "By the grace of God I am what I am?" Was there one to whom God did not "give to *will*, as well as to *do*, and *that* of his good pleasure?" To all without exception must it be said, as it was to the Apostles, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you. God, in choosing men, has no respect to any thing but his own glory. He is not moved by any thing in them, either present or foreseen: "he loves them, because he will love them[d];" and in predestinating them unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, he does it "*according to the good pleasure of his own will*," and "*to the praise of the glory of his own grace*[e]."]

We would not state these things in a crude and rash way. We know, they are deeply mysterious; and we are most anxious to,

II. Guard this doctrine against abuse—

Much is this doctrine hated: much too is it abused: but, however hated, or however abused, it

[b] Luke xii. 32.
[c] 1 Cor. iv. 7.
[d] Deut. vii. 6—8.
[e] Eph. i. 5, 6.

is the truth of God, and therefore must be maintained. Let none however pervert it, or draw false conclusions from it. Let none say,

1. If this doctrine be true, *no blame attaches to me*—

[What! No blame attaches to those who live in sin; to those who live "without God in the world!" Has any one *compelled* you to act thus? Have you not been *free agents* in every thing that you have done? What if you were not able of *yourselves* to fulfil the will of God, did not God exhort you to come to him for grace and strength, and did he not promise to give grace sufficient for you? Has there not been much that you might have done, which yet you have neglected? and much that you might have abstained from, which yet you have committed? Will any one go into the presence of Almighty God and say, 'I sought thee, but thou wouldst not hear: I endeavoured to the utmost of my power to comply with all thine injunctions; but thou withheldest from me the assistance that was necessary: I chose thee, but thou rejectedest me without a cause?' No: profane as many are, there is not a man to be found in the universe who will dare thus to insult his God. We all have a consciousness that sin at least is our own, whatever holiness may be: it is the fruit of our own choice, the work of our own hands: and every man who has not on the wedding garment in the last day, will be dumb before his God, and not have one word to say in vindication of himself, when the Master of the feast shall order him to be tied hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness[f].]

2. If this doctrine be true, *I may sit still, till God shall come and help me*—

[Where, we would ask, do the Scriptures countenance any such inference as this? They invariably enjoin the use of means, and promise a blessing to those who use them in a dependence upon God; "Ask and ye shall have, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you; for *every one* that asketh, receiveth, &c." Will you after this sit down and say, "I will not ask?" Be it so; you are helpless in yourselves, and incapable of doing any thing that is truly good: but so was the man with the withered arm: yet, when our Lord said to him, Stretch out thine arm, did he reply, 'Lord, I cannot?' No: he attempted to fulfil his Lord's command; and in the attempt was strengthened to perform it. So is it your duty to use the means to the best of your power, in obedience to God's command, and in dependence on his grace: and if you do so, you are assured that "you shall never

[f] See Matt. xxii. 11, 13.

seek his face in vain." You should do as much for yourselves, as if you had in yourselves an all-sufficiency for all things: but, whilst doing it, you should remember, that "your sufficiency is of God" alone. This is precisely what St. Paul has taught us. He addressed persons who were asleep, yea, dead; yet did he bid them awake, and act; and promised, that in obeying his injunctions they should obtain from Christ all needful aid: "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light[g]."]

3. If this doctrine be true, *I am in no danger, whatever I may do*—

[Does any one who professes to believe the doctrine of election make this use of it? He needs nothing more to prove, that he at least is not of God's elect: for, if there be one mark of a reprobate more strong and decisive than another, it is that of "turning the grace of God into licentiousness." There is not a word in all the book of God that gives any man a hope of salvation whilst he lives in sin. On the contrary, it is expressly declared, that, "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." If we are "chosen of God before the foundation of the world," it is "*that we may be holy*, and without blame before him in love[h]:" if "we are *chosen to salvation*, it is *through sanctification of the Spirit*, and belief of the truth[i]." God will never make his own Son "a minister of sin." If he save us at all, it will be *from* our sins, and not *in* them. Hear how indignantly God rejects the idea of his leaving men at liberty to sin: "Behold, ye trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will ye commit all manner of sins, and come and stand before me in this house which is called by my name, and say, We are *delivered to do* all these abominations? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the Lord of Hosts[k]." Yes; God does see it; and whoever maintains such a delusion as this, shall ere long find, to his cost, "whose word shall stand; God's, or his[l]."]

That no solid objection lies against this doctrine, will appear, whilst we,

III. Suggest the proper IMPROVEMENT of it—

1. It should encourage all to seek for mercy at God's hands—

[If God's election were determined only by some good that was naturally inherent in man, and man's hope of the Divine favour were built on some superior excellence that was

[g] Eph. v. 14. [h] Eph. i. 4. [i] 2 Thess. ii. 13.
[k] Jer. vii. 8—11. [l] Jer. xliv. 28. with Gal. vi. 7, 8.

in him above others, who could venture to cherish any hope at all? Certainly there would be a fearful prospect for those who have long continued in their sins: for they would naturally say, How can God ever look with compassion on such a sinner as me? The old therefore, and the dying, would at once be driven to despair. But when we are told, that God "has mercy on whom he will have mercy," and dispenses his blessings freely to whomsoever he will, the vilest sinner in the universe may say, 'Then I will not despair: I know, I have nothing whereby to recommend myself to him: but he is at liberty to shew mercy to the very chief of sinners: and in that character will I apply to him, that he may glorify himself in me.' This is a just and scriptural way of arguing: and it may be adopted by all who "know the plague of their own heart," even though they may have lived in sin throughout their whole lives, and be now come to the borders of the eternal world: they may say, 'His grace is his own; he may dispense it as he will; and, where sin has abounded, His grace may superabound. He chose Paul in order "that in him he might shew forth all long-suffering for a pattern" to the Church in all ages; and I will hope, that in me also he will shew, before the whole assembled universe, how far his grace can reach.' This is the true, legitimate, and only use which an unconverted sinner should make of God's electing love.]

2. It should fill all who are the subjects of it with the deepest humility—

[Many ignorantly imagine, that the idea of God having elected us would fill us with pride: and if his election had respect to some goodness in us above others, and were founded on our superior merits, there were some ground for pride. But when God, in ordaining men to life, has respect only to his own sovereign will and pleasure, and to the manifestation of his own glory, no man has any ground to boast: nor will any man who is a partaker of this grace wish to boast. On the contrary, he will be disposed rather to say with the profoundest adoration, "What was I, Lord, that thou shouldest visit me?" This is the effect which the conferring of an undeserved favour has on every humble mind. Elizabeth, when the blessed Virgin, after her miraculous conception, came to visit her, exclaimed, "Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come unto me[m]?" How much more then will the saint be filled with wonder that *the Lord himself* should come, and take up his abode *within his very soul!* Again; when Mephibosheth was told by David that his Father's property should be restored to him, and that he should eat

[m] Luke i. 43.

continually at the king's table, "he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am[n]?" How much more then will the child of God abase himself as the most unworthy of mankind, when the King of kings, of his own sovereign love and mercy, tells him, that all the glory of heaven shall be his, and that he shall feast for ever at the marriage supper of the Lamb! This was the effect produced on Paul, who, because there was no word in the whole Greek language sufficiently strong whereby he might express his sense of his own unworthiness, made a word for himself, that places him beneath the least and lowest of all the saints of God: he calls himself, "less than the least of all saints." That is our proper appellation; and the more just sense we have of God's electing love, the more ready we shall all be to adopt it for our motto.]

3. It should stimulate them also to universal holiness—

[If we be "a *chosen generation*, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a *peculiar people*, it is that we may shew forth the praises of Him that hath called us out of darkness into marvellous light[o]." Yes; we are "created *unto good works*, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." We are to be as "lights in a dark place;" as "a city set upon a hill:" we are to be "epistles of Christ, known and read of all men." Man expects this of us: and God also expects it of us. Man will naturally say, 'What proof do these people give that they are the elect of God? If we look at them, what do we find in them more than others?' These expectations are reasonable: and, if you are not more holy than others, they may reasonably say, that you are hypocrites and deceivers. I would call upon you then to shew by your fruits that you are trees of the Lord's planting. I call upon you to "shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life" in the whole of your conversation. Hear the exhortation of an inspired Apostle: "Put on, *as the elect of God*, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye[p]." These are the graces that ye are called to exercise, and these are the fruits whereby ye are to be known. By thus exhibiting to the world the mind that was in Christ, you will prove your title to the character of his saints as "called, and chosen, and faithful[q]."]

[n] 2 Sam. ix. 7, 8.
[o] 1 Pet. ii. 9.
[p] Col. iii. 12, 13.
[q] Rev. xvii. 14.

MDCCCXCIV.

GRACE AND WORKS OPPOSED TO EACH OTHER AS GROUNDS OF SALVATION.

Rom. xi. 6. *If by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.*

IN reference to the doctrines of grace, St. Paul maintained a most watchful and "godly jealousy." On points of a less vital nature, he was ready to concede as far as possible; but on the point of *salvation by grace through faith* he was firm and immoveable. He would not give way for a moment, even though all the college of Apostles had opposed him[a], or an angel from heaven had professed to have received a commission to proclaim any thing that was inconsistent with it[b]. In the superstructure of our religion there might be errors, yea, considerable errors, as he tells us, and yet our souls be saved. Injurious indeed they would be, extremely injurious, to our welfare; but still they would not be utterly subversive of our hopes. But if the error affected the foundation of our religion, he declared it to be utterly incompatible with our final salvation[c].

This jealousy of his is peculiarly visible in the words which we have just read. They were not necessary to the Apostle's argument. In the preceding context he is shewing that God has among the Jews, as well as among the Gentiles, a chosen remnant: but having called them "a remnant according to the election of grace," he lays hold on the opportunity to confirm his favourite position, that *salvation is altogether of grace;* so entirely of grace, as absolutely to exclude works altogether from having any share in meriting or procuring it.

The observation thus introduced deserves the deeper attention; because it shews how near to the Apostle's heart the truth was that is contained in it. Let us then, in considering this observation, attend to,

[a] Gal. ii. 5. [b] Gal. i. 8, 9. [c] 1 Cor. iii. 11—15.

1. The truth of it—

The observation is simply this, That salvation must be altogether of grace, or altogether of works; for that the two cannot possibly coalesce; since each of them excludes the other as much as light and darkness. Now,

This observation is true—

[The Apostle has before drawn the distinction between "a reward of grace, and a reward of debt[d]." And it is clear, that if a thing be a gift, it cannot have been earned; and, on the other hand, if it have been earned, it cannot be a gift. It is true, the sum required may bear no proportion to the blessing bestowed: but still, however small the sum be, it is, as far as it goes, *a price paid* for the thing obtained: and whether that be more or less, it equally destroys the notion of a free gift. We readily concede, that all the works that Paul himself performed would be as nothing in comparison of eternal life: but yet, if it be only a thousandth part of his works that has been paid for eternal life, that life is *so far* earned by works, and ceases to be a gift of grace: and though we may admire the goodness of God in giving heaven for so small a consideration, the person to whom it is given will have to boast that he paid for it the consideration that had been demanded of him.]

It is true in reference to every part of our salvation—

[It is true in reference to our first election of God. If God chose us on account of some good works which he foresaw we should perform, those works must to all eternity be acknowledged as the true ground of our salvation; and our salvation must therefore be of works, and not of grace.

We are not now inquiring, whether any such works as would be proper to influence God's mind, can be performed by man, by man too in his fallen state, and unassisted by his God: (these are points which at the present we leave untouched:) we are only shewing now, that, supposing such works to be wrought, and God's election to be determined by them, election would be of works, and not of grace.

In like manner, if our justification be on account of any work of ours, we may boast that it has been not a mere act of grace and mercy for Christ's sake, but a debt paid to us for something done by us. As to the comparative value of the work and the reward, we again say, that it is nothing to the purpose: it may serve to illustrate the goodness of God in annexing so great a

[d] Rom. iv. 4.

reward to so small a work; but still the reward so conferred bears, and must ever bear, the character of a debt, and not of a gift.

To this it may be objected, that good works are represented in the Scripture as *objects of reward*, nay more, as forming *the measure* of that reward. This is true: but it does not in the least degree militate against the position before stated. Let us bear in mind what the Apostle's statement is: it is this, that if, in any part of our salvation from first to last, our works form the meritorious ground of our acceptance with God, our salvation is not of grace, but of works; and that consequently, if salvation be of grace, all works of ours must be excluded as forming the ground of our acceptance with him. But this is not contradicted by any thing which God may do after we are accepted of him. The whole case is then altered:

The works done, are done, not in our own strength, but by the operation of God's Spirit within us.

They are done, not in order to purchase heaven, but to manifest our love to God, and promote his glory.

They come up to God, not as claiming any thing on account of their own intrinsic excellence, but as washed in the Redeemer's blood, and perfumed with the incense of his all-prevailing intercession.

They come, not as demanding a recompence on the footing of justice, but as owing all their hope of acceptance to God's free and gracious promises.

They come, not to set aside the grace of God, but to illustrate, adorn, and magnify it.

If any one of these works were to arrogate to itself the office of recommending us to God, its value would be lost; and so baneful would be its influence, that it would destroy the value, and prevent the reward, of all the other works that the person had ever done.

Hence then it is evident, that though *God* may, for the *magnifying of his own grace*, bestow *gifts* upon his *children*, that can be no reason why *man*, whilst *an enemy to God*, should, *on the footing of justice*, for *the gratifying of his own pride*, *demand* of God a reward of *debt*. God is at liberty to give *what*, and *when*, and *to whom*, he will: and whatsoever, of his own free grace, he has promised, he most assuredly will perform: but this gives no right to man to *claim* what God *never has promised*, and what he *has in ten thousand places declared he never will give*.

We again therefore revert to our position, and say, that, if salvation be by grace, it cannot in any respect, or any degree, be of works: and, consequently, works must be for ever renounced as a ground of our acceptance with God, and we must look for every thing from grace, free grace, alone.]

The truth of the Apostle's observation being established, we proceed to shew,

II. The importance of it—

We have already called your attention to the way in which the observation is introduced, and which, we conceive, marks very strongly the importance of it in the Apostle's mind. And we may notice the same from the very pointed way in which the observation is made. The Apostle seems determined that nobody shall misunderstand him: and he has effectually secured his object in that particular.

To shew the importance of his observation then, we say, that,

1. It establishes beyond all doubt the freeness and fulness of the Gospel salvation—

[In many places, both in the Old and New Testament, does God guard his people against arrogating any thing to themselves. He warns the Jews by Moses, that they would be ready to indulge this propensity: but that his mercies to them had been in no respect the fruit of their own goodness, but wholly of his free and sovereign grace[e]? The only thing which they could behold on a retrospect, and which they ought to look back upon with never-ceasing shame, was, one continued scene of wickedness and provocations[f]. Thus St. Paul again and again reminds us, that it was "not by works of righteousness which we had done, but according to his own mercy that God had saved us[g]:" and still more plainly in another epistle, that "he had saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to *his own purpose and grace* which was given us in Christ Jesus *before the world began*[h]." But the words of our text are so strong, that no one can attempt to get over them, without shewing, that he is manifestly "wresting" them from their proper, and obvious, and only meaning. Be it known then, that salvation is, and ever must be, of grace, from first to last. Our election from eternity, our justification in time, and our glorification when time shall be no more, are all the fruits of God's free and sovereign grace: the foundation was laid in grace; the superstructure is raised by grace; and "when the head-stone shall be brought forth, we must still cry, Grace, grace unto it[i]."

[e] Deut. ix. 4—6. [f] Deut. ix. 7. Compare Ezek. xxxvi. 31, 32.
[g] Tit. iii. 5. [h] 2 Tim. i. 9 [i] Zech. iv. 6, 7, 9.

There is not a soul in heaven that must not to all eternity say, "By the grace of God I am what I am."]

2. It secures against all invasion the honour of God—

[Men are ever attempting to rob God of his glory: they cannot endure that *all* the honour of their salvation should be given to God alone. When they see the crown placed on the Redeemer's head, they feel as if they themselves were injured and dishonoured. They think that some part of the glory belongs to them; that their works must be considered, in part at least, as forming the ground of their justification; and that God's election of them was determined by his foresight of their superior goodness. But, when they come to these words, and see what an insuperable obstacle they oppose to all such vain conceits, they find that there is no alternative left them, but to earn salvation by a perfect obedience to the law, or to accept it as the free gift of God in Christ Jesus. They see, that, to blend the two is impossible; and that, if they do not accept salvation wholly by grace, they are forced altogether upon the covenant of works, and are cut off from all hope in Christ Jesus[k]. This alternative they dare not for a moment to adopt; and therefore they are constrained to give to God the glory due unto his name, and to acknowledge Christ both as "the Author, and the Finisher, of their faith[l]." In a word, they are made willing to "glory in Christ alone."]

3. It makes clear the path of the true penitent—

[Persons in the earlier stages of repentance are apt to be much perplexed. They think they ought to have something of their own to unite with Christ's merits, or at least something to recommend them to his favour. But this they cannot find: and the more they discover of the evil of their own ways, the farther they appear to be from possessing any of those qualifications which they desire. This greatly alarms them; and makes them fear it would be presumptuous in such unworthy creatures as they to hope in Christ. But when they see the force of the Apostle's observation, they are convinced, that hitherto they have proceeded on wrong grounds, and that the only true way of going to Christ, is, to go with all their sins upon them, and receive salvation from him as the purchase of his blood, and the gift of his grace. This, when once seen, dissipates all the clouds and darkness that have obscured their way, and makes their path to life as clear as the sun at noonday. They see themselves in the predicament of the wounded Israelites, when directed to look to the brazen serpent; or of

[k] Gal. v. 2—4. [l] Heb. xii. 2.

the jailor, when bidden to believe in Christ. They believe; they look; they live.]

On the observation thus explained we ground a few words of ADVICE—

1. Accept with gratitude this free salvation—

[Do not suffer the pride of your hearts to rise against it. Do not grudge unto God the honour of saving you by his own grace. Were you sinking in the midst of the ocean, would you refuse deliverance, unless you were left to earn it, or some of the honour of your preservation were to be assigned to you? Be not then such enemies to yourselves as to reject a free salvation from death and hell. You know full well, that you did nothing to induce God to send his only Son into the world: you know also that you contributed nothing to Christ, to give perfection to his obedience, or virtue to his sacrifice. You must know too, if you are not blinded even to infatuation, that you can do nothing which does not need mercy on account of its own imperfections. Be prevailed upon then to accept with thankfulness a free and full salvation: you can add nothing to what Christ has done and suffered for you: and the consequence of attempting to add any thing will be inevitable and eternal ruin. Let Christ have all the honour of his own work, and you shall have all the benefit.]

2. Give no occasion for the objections that are raised against it—

[Those who are averse to the doctrines of grace, always represent the favourers of those doctrines as embracing them in order the more quietly to live in sin: and if they can find a person who turns the grace of God into licentiousness, they will not be contented with blaming him, but will cast the blame on the Gospel itself, and represent such conduct as the natural result of such principles: and one such instance of hypocrisy will be made a subject of great notoriety, when a thousand instances of blameless and exemplary piety will be overlooked. Be careful then, brethren, to give no occasion for such observations. Be careful not to cast a stumbling-block before the ungodly world; for, if there be a "woe to the world because of offences," there will be a ten-fold heavier "woe unto him by whom the offence cometh." Be watchful against the incursions of sin, and the temptations of Satan; "that he who is on the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you."]

3. Recommend and adorn it by a holy conversation—

[Shew by your lives what the proper tendency and effect of grace is. We are told that "the grace of God which bringeth salvation, teaches us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live righteously, and soberly, and godly in this present world." Shew then, by all your dealings with men, what true righteousness is: shew, by your perfect self-government in all your tempers, dispositions, and habits, what true sobriety is: and shew, by the spirituality of your minds and the heavenliness of your lives, wherein true godliness consists. This will recommend the Gospel more effectually than all the encomiums that can be lavished upon it, and will operate more strongly to convince men of its excellence than all the arguments that can be urged. Let it be seen then, that whilst you magnify and extol the grace of God, you are the truest friends of good works; for that, though you exclude them from your foundation, you display them in your superstructure, and, in fact, raise them higher, and of a nobler quality, than any other people in the universe.]

MDCCCXCV.

THE RESTORATION OF THE JEWS A BLESSING TO THE GENTILES.

Rom. xi. 11, 12. *I say then, Have they [the Jews] stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?*

"THE ways of God are in the great deep, and his footsteps are not known:" they are utterly inscrutable to us: "as high as the heavens are above the earth, so are His ways above our ways, and His thoughts above our thoughts." We cannot see the end of any one of his dispensations. Who could ever have conceived the designs of God in suffering Joseph to be sold into Egypt? Yet did God intend by that dispensation to keep the whole Egyptian nation from perishing by famine, yea, and the very persons who sold him thither. No less mysterious are his dealings with the Jews: they are cast off: they are led captive of all nations: yet are they suffering for the good of all the people amongst whom they dwell; and

even for their own ultimate advantage also. This is strongly asserted in the passage before us, where their fall is said to be "the riches of the Gentiles," as their recovery also will be in a far more signal manner and degree.

We presume not to think that we can ever fathom this deep mystery: yet will it be profitable for us to consider it as far as it is revealed: and therefore we shall endeavour, according to the light given us, to shew you, *What an interest the Gentiles have in God's dealings with the Jews;* particularly in,

I. Their present dispersion—

This was designed of God for the salvation of the Gentiles—

[Doubtless the Jews richly merited this judgment: and therefore, whatever good may be designed for others, no injury is done to them. And God too, if he had pleased, might have vouchsafed mercy to the Gentiles, without rejecting the Jews: his heart was large enough to embrace both, and his power to save them both. But he, in his own infinite wisdom, ordained otherwise. It is not for us to inquire, Why he acted thus? It is sufficient for us that he has seen fit to do so: and "he giveth not account to us of any of his matters." This advantage from it at least we see, that he has by this means exhibited, in a contrasted view, "his severity to them, and his goodness to us[a];" and consequently, has illustrated and glorified at the same time his apparently opposite perfections of justice and mercy. But, however this may be, so he has ordained, and so he has done: and it is an undoubted fact, that,]

The fall of the Jews has led to the salvation of the Gentiles—

[The very circumstance of the Gospel being rejected by the Jews, was favourable to the reception of it among the Gentiles; inasmuch as it demonstrated, that there was no confederacy among the Jews to deceive them; that the Apostles, who brought the tidings of salvation to them at the peril of their lives, were men of strict integrity; and that the Scriptures which the Jews so unwittingly fulfilled, must be true. And the conduct of the Jews in relation to the Gospel did actually produce this effect. Their enmity against it at the very first promulgation of it caused them to persecute the

[a] ver. 22.

Church with the utmost vehemence: that persecution drove multitudes of Christians (almost all except the Apostles) from Jerusalem, and scattered them through all Judæa and Samaria: and the people, so scattered, "went everywhere preaching the word:" so that, instead of suppressing the Gospel, as they hoped, the Jews were instrumental to the sending forth of thousands, all at once, to preach it[b]. Again, when Paul and Barnabas had preached to the Jews, as they had hitherto invariably done in the first place, at Antioch, the inveterate malignity of the Jews determined them henceforth to preach to the Gentiles, agreeably to the command which had been given them in the Scriptures: and the consequence of this was, that multitudes of the Gentiles immediately embraced the Gospel, and "glorified the word of the Lord[c]." Thus, "the fall of the Jews became the riches of the Gentiles," inasmuch as it was the occasion of the tidings of "reconciliation being published to the Gentile world," and "the unsearchable riches of Christ" being scattered in rich profusion over the face of the whole earth.]

The present rejection of the Jews is ultimately designed also even for the good of that benighted people—

[God designed that the transfer of his blessings to the Gentiles should "provoke to jealousy" his own forsaken people: and St. Paul, in preaching to the Gentiles, had that very object in view, namely, "to provoke to emulation those who were of his own flesh, and thereby to save some of them." Whilst possessing exclusively all the tokens of God's favour, they were regardless of it: but when they saw that the gifts of miracles and of prophecy were transferred from them to the Gentiles, and that the Gentiles were made happy in the enjoyment of their God, they were led to inquire more candidly into the truths delivered by the Apostles, and thus were in very many instances converted to the faith. Nor can we doubt but that the same effect would yet more frequently flow from that cause, if the lives of Christians continued to be such as they were in the apostolic age.]

But still richer benefits will flow to the world from,

II. Their future restoration—

That the Jews will in due time be converted to Christianity, is certain—

[When St. Paul asked, Whether their fall was final and irrecoverable, he shuddered at the idea, and declared, that

[b] Acts viii. 1, 4. [c] Acts xiii. 46—48.

God had certainly no such purpose respecting them: that, on the contrary, he had entered into covenant with them to restore them in due season, and to confer on them, as well as on the Gentiles, all the blessings of redemption. The period he had fixed in his divine counsels was, "When the fulness of the Gentiles should come in;" that is, when there should be among the Gentiles such a measure of concern about the Gospel, as should shew that the time for their fuller and more general reception of it was arrived[d]. (It is the *commencement* and *not the close*, of this period, that must be understood by "the fulness of the Gentiles being come[e].") Then shall "the fulness of the Jews" also be brought in. Multitudes in every place shall then *begin* to be converted to the faith; and with greater or less rapidity will the whole nation be turned to the Lord. "The first-fruits were holy; and so is the lump: the root was holy; and so are the branches." Hence their restoration is assured to them; for "God's gifts and calling are without repentance[f]."]

The effect of this upon the Gentiles will be blessed in the extreme—

[The Jews being dispersed over the whole world, the change wrought on them will attract universal attention: and carry such conviction with it to the minds of the beholders, as nothing can withstand. Besides, the Jews feeling the truth and importance of the Gospel themselves, will, as in the apostolic age, become preachers of it themselves; and their Gentile neighbours, knowing what enemies to Christianity they lately were, and seeing the wonderful revolution that has taken place in their minds, will be led to inquire into the Gospel themselves, and will be constrained to yield to its influence. So rapid will their conversion be, that they will "flock to Christ even as doves to their windows," and "a nation will be born in a day."

We have before shewn the beneficial effects which have resulted to the Gentiles from the *fall* of the Jews: and if such inestimable benefits have been conferred on the world by their fall, "how much more" shall the same, and greater, benefits arise from "*their fulness?*" Mark the force of the argument here. The Jews, when the Gospel was preached to them,

[d] ver. 25—27. compared with Isai. lix. 20, 21.

[e] πλήρωμα corresponds with ἥττημα. As soon as the fall of the Jews *commenced*, the benefit began to arise to the Gentiles; and as soon as the time for the more general conversion of the Gentiles shall *commence*, the time for the conversion of the Jews will commence also.

[f] ver. 16, 29.

rejected, blasphemed, and opposed it with all their might: but when they themselves shall be converted by it, they will embrace it most cordially, they will cry mightily to God for the success of it, and they will labour to the uttermost to diffuse the knowledge of it throughout the world. If then their rejection of it was so productive of benefit to the Gentile world, how much more shall their *acceptance* of it be! if their *blasphemies* against it, how much more their *prayers* for its diffusion! if their most envenomed *opposition* to it, how much more their zealous *co-operation* in extending the knowledge of it! We have seen the former; and we may with certainty infer the latter.]

From this subject the following REFLECTIONS naturally arise:

1. What compassion should we feel for the Jewish nation!

[Once were they the most highly-favoured people upon earth: the privileges which were exclusively conferred on them, almost exceed belief——— But how degraded are they now! they are "a hissing, and a reproach, to the whole earth[g]." Yet behold, such are they become for us! Incredible as it may seem, "they were broken off, that we might be engrafted on their stem[h]:" they were disinherited, that we might possess their property[i]. Can we consider this, and feel no compassion for them? Can we pass them by, as the priest and Levite did, and shew them no mercy; especially when God has told us, that the very end for which he has had mercy upon us, is, that we may be the means of extending that mercy unto them[k]? Even in reference to the wants of the body, God has said, "If a man see his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" How much more then is this true respecting the wants of the soul! Beloved brethren, judge yourselves in reference to this matter; and try your love to God by the measure of your compassion to his benighted people: and never think that your own souls are right before God, till you have learned to pity, and pray for, and to seek the salvation of, "the lost sheep of the house of Israel."]

2. How should we fear and tremble for ourselves!

[Highly favoured as the Jews once were, they are now outcasts from God, and monuments of his just vengeance: and, if we abuse our privileges, a similar fate awaits us also. "If God spared not the natural branches," says the Apostle, "take heed lest he also spare not thee[l]." It was "for their unbelief

[g] Jer. xxix. 18. ver. 28, 31. [h] ver. 19. [i] ver. 28, 31. [l] ver. 21.

that they were broken off: and it is by faith that we stand. O then, be not high-minded, but fear[m]." Fear "lest there be in you also an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." Do not imagine that a mere outward profession of Christianity is of any value: no, it is "a seeing of Him who is invisible:" a "walking by faith, and not by sight:" it is the exercise of that "faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen;" in a word, it is "a life of faith upon the Son of God, who has loved you, and given himself for you." *This*, beloved, is the life to which you are called by the Gospel: and it is by such a life that you are to "provoke the Jews to emulation:" and, if you live not in this way, or, having begun to live thus, turn away from it, it would be better for you never to have heard the Gospel; yea, it were better that you had been born Jews, or heathens, and infinitely "better that you had never been born" at all.]

3. How earnestly should we labour for the conversion of the Jews.

[God has decreed that they shall be converted: and we have reason to believe that the period fixed for it in the Divine counsels is not far distant. It is a fact, that multitudes in the heathen world are expecting a change in their religion: the Mahometans and Hindoos throughout our eastern empire are strongly impressed with this idea: and the exertions making in every possible way for the conversion of the heathen world, warrant us to hope, that "their fulness" will speedily commence. At all events, "we are debtors to the Jews," and should seek to discharge our debt[n]. Though they are at this time "enemies for our sakes, they are still beloved for their fathers' sakes[o]:" and if, notwithstanding their present enmity against Christ, they are beloved of *God* for their fathers' sakes, should they not be beloved of *us?* Think how indebted we are to their fathers, to those who, at the peril of their lives, brought the glad tidings of salvation home to *us:* and should we not labour to recompense all this in acts of love to their descendants? It is a favourite notion with many, that to attempt the conversion of the Jews is a hopeless task. But what ground is there for such a desponding thought as this? Are *they* farther off from God than the Gentiles were, when the Gospel was first published to them? or is it a harder thing for God to convert *them* than to convert *us?* God expressly tells us, that it is a work of *less* difficulty: "If thou wert cut out of the olive-tree, which is wild by nature, and were graffed, contrary to nature, into a good olive-tree, HOW MUCH MORE shall these, which be the natural branches, be graffed into their own olive-

[m] ver. 20. [n] Rom. xv. 27. [o] ver. 28.

tree[p]?" Despair not then of doing them good; but exert yourselves in every possible way for their conversion to the faith of Christ. You are told, that "if they abide not in unbelief, they shall be graffed in again: for God is able to graff them in again[q]." Seek then to convince them of the truth of Christianity, and to bring them to the knowledge and love of their Messiah. If you desire only the conversion of the *Gentile* world, you should begin with the *Jews;* because it is the fulness of the *Jews* that is to operate on the *Gentiles*, and to effect, as it were, among *them*, "a resurrection from the dead[r]." But it is for God's sake, whose people they are; and for Christ's sake, who bought them with his blood; and for your own sake, who must give an account of the talents intrusted to your care, that I call upon you to be workers together with God in this great cause: and, if you have any sense of God's "goodness to you," seek to avert and terminate "his severity to them[s]."]

[p] ver. 24. [q] ver. 23.
[r] ver. 15. [s] ver. 22. with 2 Cor. ii. 16.

MDCCCXCVI.

NEGLECT OF THE JEWS REPROVED.

Rom. xi. 17—21. *If some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert graffed in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be graffed in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.*

IT is surprising, considering how minutely the Apostle has explained the subject contained in this chapter, and how strongly he has marked its almost unparalleled importance; it is surprising, I say, that it should so little have attracted the attention of the Christian world. The Apostle, after contemplating it, exclaimed, "O the depths!" But we, after having read his statement times without number, have seen no depths in it; or, at least, none which we have been at all disposed to fathom. There is one point in particular, which, in considering this subject, we have

overlooked; and that is, that God still regards the Jews as to a certain degree, his peculiar people; and that, notwithstanding their degradation and depravity, there is a holiness about their whole nation, and a halo, as it were, around the head of every individual belonging to it. The offering of the first-fruits to the Lord sanctified the whole harvest; and the offering of a cake of the first of the dough sanctified the whole lump[a]. Thus the consecration of the patriarchs to Jehovah conferred on all their posterity a relative kind of holiness: and still more did the separation of Abraham unto the Lord, as "the root" of that elect people, impart a federal holiness to all the branches that should ever spring from it. This relative or federal holiness attached to the whole nation; to the ten tribes, as well as the tribes of Judah and Benjamin: and it adhered to the Jews during their captivity in Babylon, as well as before and after that period. It still continued, also, many years after their crucifixion of their Messiah, and after their privileges had been transferred to the Gentile world. The Apostle, in the words before my text, speaks of it as yet existing: and therefore it must exist at this time, because the reason of the thing exists as much as ever: "If the first-fruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches." And on this is grounded the admonition to the whole Christian Church, "Boast not against the branches."

Now, by marking thus the connexion of our text with the preceding context, we shall see the propriety of noticing *the use which we are to make of the rejection of the Jews.* This awful dispensation should fill us with,

I. Compassion for them—

There is here, as you will perceive, *a fact acknowledged*—

["Some, even very many, of the branches have been broken off from the olive-tree which God's right hand had planted: and we Gentiles, who were only a wild olive-tree,

[a] Lev. xxiii. 10—17. and Numb. xv. 19—21.

have been graffed into their stock, and are with them at this moment partaking of the root and fatness of the olive-tree." This fact it is impossible to deny. They, instead of enjoying the ordinances of God's worship, as in former ages, are scattered over the face of the whole earth, and are utterly incapable of worshipping God according to their law. They have no temple, no priest, no altar, no sacrifice, wherewith to approach their God. But these blessings are transferred to us; and we enjoy them in all their fulness. Through the one sacrifice once offered upon Calvary, we have the most intimate access to God, and a rich effusion of his blessings upon our souls whensoevever we draw nigh unto him in his Son's name. There is not a privilege that was ever enjoyed by the most favoured of God's saints in the days of old, but we possess the same, so far as our necessities require it.]

But mark *the sad abuse of it that prevails*—

[Instead of feeling compassion for the Jews in their present degraded state, we are ready to look down upon them with contempt, and to exult over them, as objects of God's merited indignation. Thus we "boast against the branches," and indulge a secret satisfaction in their fall. In fact, we treat them nearly in the way in which they formerly treated the Gentile world. They regarded the Gentiles as "dogs;" and actually designated them by that opprobrious term: and, though that term is not in use amongst us in reference to the Jews, the contempt expressed by it is as deeply rooted in our hearts as ever it was in theirs. But they, in comparison of us, had reason on their side: for the Gentiles, whom they despised, had no knowledge of God whatever, but were bowing down to gods of wood and stone: whereas the Jews are still worshippers of the true and living God; and have been distinguished by him above all other people upon earth; yea, and are still distinguished by his peculiar care, and are reserved as objects wherein he will yet be more than ever glorified; and as instruments, too, whereby he will hereafter dispense his richest blessings to the whole world. Are these, then, to be treated with contempt? Are these to be regarded as "branches, against which it becomes us to boast?"]

Let us hear *God's own correction of this abuse*—

[In what have we any right to glory over them? Have they ever been indebted to us, or received any benefits at our hands? Have not we, on the contrary, received from them every blessing that we enjoy? What knowledge have we of God, that has not been transmitted to us from them? What hope have we towards God, that has not arisen from communications made by them? What comfort have we in life,

which is not administered by them? What hope have we in death, which is not founded upon information derived from them? What glory can we look for in another world, but that which has been unveiled to us by them? Take from us the instruction which we have received from them, and we shall be reduced at once to all the darkness and misery in which our early ancestors were involved, and in which the whole heathen world are at this very moment immersed. Admirable is the illustration which the Apostle gives us of this truth. Conceive a "branch boasting against the root;" and saying, 'I am more exalted than thou, and more estimable in every respect. Behold my foliage, and my fruit: what hast thou of worth or beauty, in comparison of me?' How would this arrogance be silenced in a moment, by the answer which the root would of course return! 'You boast of your beauty and your fruitfulness. Whence did you derive them, but from me? What would you ever have possessed, if it had not been communicated to you by me? Instead of boasting therefore over me, acknowledge your obligations to me, and confess that all which you either are or have, you have derived from me.' Thus, in relation to all that we possess or hope for as the people of the Lord, we stand indebted to the Jews; whilst they, on the contrary, owe nothing to us; but rather have reason to execrate us, for withholding from them the light we have enjoyed, and putting every obstacle in their way, to perpetuate their ruin. What, then, should be our feelings towards them? what, but the tenderest compassion for their state, and the most earnest desire to restore them to God's favour?]

To our pity for them we should add,

II. Watchfulness over ourselves—

What use is commonly made of their rejection, may be seen in *the self-vindicating reply* which is here anticipated—

Thou wilt say then, "The branches were broken off that I might be graffed in." The Apostle attempts not to deny this awful and mysterious truth: yea, he accedes to it; saying, "Well," it is so. But, granting this, is it any reason for boasting against them? Is it not rather a reason for pitying their undone condition? Were we to see a man deprived of his paternal inheritance, and perishing with hunger; and were we informed, that he had been disinherited, merely that *we*, who had no worthiness in ourselves, and no relation to his father, might possess his estates; should we feel disposed to glory over him and insult him? Should we not rather wish to administer to him such relief as he stood in need of, if we could do it without injury to ourselves? Would not a want

of such consideration for him be justly accounted the greatest cruelty?]

But hear *the phenomenon accounted for*—

[True it is that God has broken them off, and graffed us in; and that he has "broken them off, *that he might* graff us in." But we are mistaken if we think that God has in this matter acted altogether as a sovereign. In the first choice of Abraham and his posterity, he did exercise his sovereignty: but, in rejecting them, he acts upon the grounds of strict justice. And this is a distinction which we are too apt to overlook. *In the bestowment of his favours*, God finds his motives solely in his own bosom; but *in the execution of his judgments*, he finds them solely in the conduct of those whom he resolves to punish. They have brought upon themselves his displeasure by their inveterate unbelief. Though they saw all God's wonders in Egypt, and at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness, they were always full of unbelief, and ready to trust in gods of their own creation, rather than in him. Nay, more: when they had seen all the evidences of Christ's Messiahship, instead of believing in him, they cried, "Away with him! crucify him! crucify him!" For these iniquities God cast them off: and in their rejection it becomes us to see and acknowledge the righteousness of his ways. Had it pleased God so to order it, he could have united us with them on the same stock, which would have borne both as easily as one: but God saw fit to make the Jews monuments of his righteous indignation against sin: and, when we ourselves are so prone to sin, it ill becomes us to triumph over them. Bear in mind this proceeding,]

And attend to *the instruction founded upon it*—

[Hear what the dispensation says to you: "You stand by faith;" and have the same reason to tremble for fear of God's judgments as they had. If they had continued to exercise faith in God, they had never been cast out: nor shall you, if you "live altogether by faith in the Son of God, who loved you, and gave himself for you." But if you distrust God, and rebel against him, and rely on any thing of your own, instead of the Lord Jesus Christ, God's anger will smoke against you in like manner; and you also will become monuments of his righteous indignation. If God spared not the natural branches, there is no reason to think he will spare those which have been taken from a wild olive-tree, and graffed in among them. The improvement, therefore, which you are to make of this dispensation, is, "Be not high-minded, but fear." Put away all your self-preference and contempt of others: and, under a consciousness of your liability to fall, beg of God to strengthen your faith; and endeavour to "walk in the fear of the Lord all the day long."]

And now, brethren,

1. Accept thankfully this reproof—

[You cannot but be sensible, how shamefully the Jews have been neglected, not only by you, but by the whole Christian world, these seventeen hundred years. Any excuse has been quite sufficient to justify your indifference for their welfare. "The time for their national conversion is not come." Was it come, then, eighteen hundred years ago? Who has spoken more strongly respecting their rejection than St. Paul? Yet did he labour with all earnestness, if by any means he might save *some*. And this also we ought to do, even though we had eighteen more centuries to wait for this event. But the time, we have reason to think, is very near at hand; as events, no less than the prophecies, appear to indicate. But, be this as it may, I call on you to blush and be confounded for having so long boasted against them; and henceforth, by every possible means, to concur in promoting their conversion to the faith of Christ — — —]

2. Follow diligently the counsel given you—

[Improve the situation, wherein, through God's tender mercy, you are placed. Are you partakers of the root and fatness of the true olive-tree? See to it, that you bring forth such fruits as this root produced in former days — — — Look at Abraham, David, Isaiah, Daniel, Paul; and see that the grace of God operate as effectually in you as it did in them. And when you call to mind what efforts were made by the holy Apostles for your benefit, let a measure of the same love animate you in behalf of those in whose place you stand — — —]

MDCCCXCVII.

AGAINST PRIDE AND SECURITY.

Rom. xi. 20. *Be not high-minded, but fear.*

THE deep mysteries of our religion are calculated at once to encourage sinners, and to humble saints. The sovereignty of God is a great depth; and it was awfully displayed in the rejection of the Jews, and the admission of the Gentiles into his Church. This is the subject of which the Apostle speaks in the whole context: and he makes use of it as the means of provoking to emulation the Jews themselves, and

at the same time of guarding the believing Gentiles against self-preference and self-security.

In considering his exhortation, we shall,

I. Explain its import—

The former part of it contains a dissuasive from pride—

[The proper tendency of religion is to produce humility: but, through the corruption of our nature, pride will take occasion even from the grace of God itself, to rise in our hearts. What self-complacency will sometimes arise from a consciousness of our superior attainments in truth and holiness! What acrimonious severity towards those, who dishonour their profession! And what contemptuous disregard of those who are yet immersed in ignorance and sin! Together with this self-preference we are also too apt to indulge a secure and self-depending spirit, and to think "our mountain so strong, that we can never be moved[a]." But as the former disposition is most hateful to God[b], so the latter also is an object of his utter abhorrence[c]. In both these views therefore it becomes every believer to attend to the Apostle's advice, and, instead of entertaining too high an opinion of his own wisdom, strength, or goodness, to "think soberly[d]."]

In the latter part the Apostle recommends humility and watchfulness—

[By "fear," we are not to understand a slavish dread of God's wrath; for *that*, so far from being opposite to pride, is in many cases the offspring of it. That which is here recommended is, a holy jealousy over ourselves, lest by any means we be tempted to walk unworthy of our high privileges, and thereby provoke God to deprive us of them. We are in the midst of an ensnaring world, beset with many and subtle adversaries, and ready to be beguiled by a treacherous and deceitful heart. Hence, like St. Paul himself[e], we are necessitated to use the utmost circumspection, diligence, and self-denial, lest, after all our exertions, our labour prove in vain.]

To shew the importance of this exhortation, we shall,

II. Point out the reasons of it—

Many reasons might be assigned: but we shall content ourselves with noticing three:

[a] Ps. xxx. 7.
[b] Isai. lxv. 5.
[c] Jer. xvii. 5. Prov. xxviii. 26.
[d] Rom. xii. 3.
[e] 1 Cor. ix. 27.

1. We have no stability in ourselves—

[As all our ability and inclination to what is good, are derived from God at first, so must we receive continual supplies from him, even as of light from the sun. Without his constant superintendence, both the visible world, and the new creation in the soul of man, would soon revert to their original chaos. This the Apostle elsewhere urges as a motive to diligence[f], and, in the words before us, to humility and care. Nor can we well have a more powerful argument; for if "we stand by faith" only, and not by any wisdom or strength of our own, it becomes us to maintain a spirit suited to our weak and dependent state.]

2. Others, apparently as safe as we, have been rejected—

[Many have long made a profession of religion and departed from it at last[g]. Demas stands as an awful monument of human weakness[h]. Lot's wife is pointed out to us in the same view[i]. The Jews, who were brought out of Egypt, and yet were destroyed in the wilderness, are expressly set forth as examples to us[k]. And, above all, the rejection of the Jewish nation for their iniquities, after they had been so long the peculiar people of God, speaks loudly to us. This in particular is urged by the Apostle in the words following the text[l]; and it teaches us, never so to value ourselves either on our relation to God, or our experience of his goodness, as to forget, that we also may be rejected, if we do not rely upon him, and unreservedly devote ourselves to him.]

3. That which was the ground of the rejection of the Jews, is very prevalent in us—

[God had given to the Jews a revelation respecting the Messiah: but they disbelieved his record, and rejected his Son: and for this their unbelief they were "broken off from the olive" which God's right hand had planted. A still clearer revelation God has given unto us: and is there not much unbelief in our hearts with respect to it? Are even the most advanced Christians so much affected with the declarations of God's word, as they would be, if faith were in constant and perfect exercise? Alas! the faith that realizes things invisible, and gives a present existence to things future[m], is found in but few, and operates but weakly in the best: and, if it should wholly fail, Satan would sift us as wheat, and we should be

[f] Phil. ii. 12, 13. [g] 1 Tim. i. 19.
[h] 2 Tim. iv. 10. [i] Luke xvii. 32.
[k] Jude, ver. 5. 1 Cor. x. 11. See also Jer. vii. 12.
[l] ver. 21, 22. [m] Heb. xi. 1.

found chaff at last[n]. When therefore we consider how weak our faith is, and that it is "by faith we stand," we have reason to fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into God's rest, any of us should seem to come short of it[o].]

We shall conclude the subject with some suitable ADVICE—

1. Bear in mind what you once were—

[To "look to the rock whence we were hewn, and to the hole of the pit, whence we were digged," will be a good antidote to pride. While we remember what we were, we shall see no reason but for humiliation and thankfulness before him, who has made us to differ both from others and from our former selves[p].]

2. Consider what you still are—

[You are, we trust, "brands plucked out of the fire:" true; but you still bear the marks of the fire upon you; and have a disposition to catch fire again, the very instant you are exposed to temptation. Let every one view himself in this light; and he will see need enough of attending to the exhortation in the text.]

3. Be aware of the deceitfulness of your own hearts—

[In ten thousand instances we must have seen how liable we are to err even in things wherein we are most confident. So blinded are we at times by pride, passion, or interest, that we think ourselves right, when others evidently perceive, that we know not what spirit we are of. Let us be aware of this tendency to deceive ourselves; and beg of God both to search our hearts, and to guide our feet.]

4. Guard against temptations to sin—

[Many are the temptations that assault us from without. From these we should flee, shunning both the occasions and the very appearance of evil. Many also are our temptations from within. These we should resist in their very first rise. We may easily extinguish a fire at its commencement, when all our efforts may be baffled, if we suffer it to proceed. For all is that direction necessary, "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation."]

5. Live wholly in dependence on the power and grace of Christ—

[n] Luke xxii. 31. [o] Heb. iv. 1.
[p] Tit. iii. 3—6. 1 Cor. iv. 7.

[Without this, all our other efforts will be fruitless. All "our fresh springs are in Christ," "without whom we can do nothing." "Except he keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." Let us then "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." Then, though weak, "we shall be able to do all things:" and though fiercely assaulted, we shall be "more than conquerors."]

MDCCCXCVIII.

THE DISPENSATIONS OF GOD TOWARDS JEWS AND GENTILES.

Rom. xi. 22—24. *Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also, if they abide not in unbelief, shall be graffed in: for God is able to graff them in again. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert graffed contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be graffed into their own olive tree?*

AMONGST those who believe the Holy Scriptures, no doubt is entertained, but that the Jews, who have engaged more of God's regard than any other nation upon earth, are yet destined to act a most important part upon the theatre of the world. They are at present, it is true, so scattered and degraded, that, according to all human appearance, they are, so far at least as respects them in their national capacity, irrecoverably sunk. But though for their multiplied iniquities they are cast off by God, their rejection is neither total nor final:—not total; for there is yet among them "a remnant according to the election of grace:" nor final; because God has determined, that in due season he will restore them to his favour, and unite them with the Gentile Church, as one fold under one Shepherd. This is fully declared in the whole preceding and following context: and justly is it represented as a most mysterious dispensation; so mysterious, that the Apostle, after contemplating it, exclaims, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and know-

ledge of God? how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out[a]!"

The points particularly noticed are, the rejection of the Jews; the calling of the Gentiles to fill their place; and the restoration of the Jews to their lost and forfeited inheritance. Of this complicated dispensation I propose, at this time, to speak; and, in accordance with my text, to mark, 1st, Its true character; and 2dly, Its final issue.

I. Let us notice *the character of this dispensation*—

It is spoken of by the Apostle as a mixture of "goodness and severity: on them that fell, severity; but towards us Gentiles, goodness."

That we may have a clear insight into the subject, we will mark it, first of all, *as exhibited in a plain statement of facts;* and then, *as viewed through the medium of a most striking illustration.*

The facts which we have to mention are all plain and acknowledged.

The Jews were once God's highly-favoured people. They had been chosen in Abraham, according to God's sovereign will: and when they were multiplied in Egypt, they were brought out from thence with mighty signs and wonders, and taken by God under his own peculiar care and protection. There was given to them a revelation of God's will, written upon stones by the very finger of God himself. Statutes also, and ordinances, were delivered to them, that they might know how to serve God acceptably, and to secure a continuance of his favour. During the space of forty years, God, in a cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night, guided them through a trackless wilderness, and provided them with every thing necessary for their support. At last he brought them into the promised land; and drove out before them seven nations, greater and mightier than they, and gave them such prosperity and power as rendered them the admiration and envy of surrounding nations. In the tabernacle, and afterwards in the temple,

[a] ver. 33.

God manifested himself to them by a visible symbol of his presence; accepting their services, and communicating to them his richest blessings. In a word, he shewed that he regarded them as his peculiar people, and that he was, in a pre-eminent and appropriate manner, their God. From time to time he visited them with mercies and with judgments, if by any means he might prevail upon them to live obedient to his will. But they rebelled against him; and provoked him at last, especially by the murder of their Messiah, to cast them off. Accordingly, he gave them up into the hands of the Romans, and scattered them as dust over the face of the whole earth; depriving them, not only of his own immediate presence, but of all power to serve him according to their appointed ordinances; so that *they are the only people upon earth who are incapable of serving their God in the way which their own consciences would dictate, and their own religion requires.* In this state they have been kept almost eighteen hundred years, living monuments of God's righteous indignation, and a proverb of reproach to the whole world. That, however, which most of all marks the "severity" of God towards them, is, that they are given over to judicial blindness and obduracy; so that, with the Scriptures in their hands, and with the plain accomplishment of them before their eyes, they cannot see the fulfilment of them in their Messiah, or repent of the evil which they have committed in putting him to death. "They are blinded," we are told, "according as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, unto this day. And David saith; Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block, and a recompence unto them; let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway[b]!" This is, beyond all comparison, the heaviest judgment that can be inflicted upon man in this life; because, when subjected to it, he lives only to "fill up a greater

[b] ver. 7—10.

measure of iniquity," and to "treasure up for himself wrath against the day of wrath." This is the unhappy state of the whole Jewish nation at this time; so that it may well be said, in relation to them, "Behold the severity of God; on them that fell, I say, severity."

If we turn our attention to the Gentile world we behold in them a no less striking display of God's "goodness." They were sitting universally in darkness and the shadow of death; and being given up to their own hearts' lusts, they were living in all manner of abominations. Their very religion was nothing but a compound of wickedness and superstition. But, whilst they were in this state, altogether "without God, and without hope," God was pleased to send his Gospel to them, and to render it effectual for their conversion; so that what God has said in reference to them, is literally true, "I am found of them that sought me not; I am made manifest unto them that asked not after me[c]." Thus, from amongst us idolatrous Gentiles, has he chosen to himself a people, whom he regards as "a crown of glory, and a royal diadem in his hand[d]." To us has he given a fuller revelation of his will than ever he gave to his ancient people: the light which to them was only like the early dawn, shines before us with the splendour of the noon-day sun. We, too, have a far nearer access to God than they, and a more filial spirit in our walk before him. The Holy Spirit, who was neither generally nor freely given to them, is on us "poured out abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour." "He takes of the things that are Christ's, and shews them plainly to us;" yea, the great work he has undertaken, is to "glorify Christ" in our hearts. The interpositions of God in our behalf are not indeed so visible as formerly; but they are not a whit less real, or less important; or rather, I should say, they exceed the former expressions of his love, as much as the concerns of the soul and of

[c] Rom. x. 20. [d] Isai. lxii. 3.

eternity exceed those of time and sense. If, then, we observe with awe his "severity" to his ancient people, must we not behold with admiration and gratitude his "goodness" to us? In fact, his mercies to them were mere shadows of those vouchsafed to us: so that we may well exclaim with the prophet, "How great is his goodness! how great is his beauty!"

But the character of this dispensation will yet more fully appear, if we view it through the medium of the image by which it is illustrated.

The Apostle represents the Jewish Church as an olive-tree planted by the hand of God himself, and watered with the dews of heaven. For a time, it brought forth fruit: but, after a season, it became barren, and disappointed wholly the expectations of the divine Husbandman. At last, Almighty God determined to express against it his merited displeasure, and to display in it his righteous indignation. Accordingly, he broke off, in quick succession, all its branches, and scattered them over the earth, as warnings to an ungodly world. In every place under heaven has he caused them to be despised and trampled under foot: and, from being the joy and admiration of the whole earth, they are become "a hissing and a curse," to all who behold them.

Not willing, however, that the stem should stand in all its naked deformity, God has taken, from a wild olive, branches to supply the place of those which have been broken off. The wild olive was in itself as worthless as any tree of the field, and utterly incapable of bringing forth any fruit at all: but, by engrafting its branches into the good olive, and making them partakers of its root and fatness, God has rendered them "fruitful in the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God." Thus are the Gentiles now growing in the very place of the Jews who have been broken off, and enjoying all the privileges which in former ages belonged exclusively to *them*. But, to see this in its true light, we must contemplate the end that awaits them both; the scattered branches withering,

and shortly to be gathered as fuel for the fire; and the engrafted scions forming a noble tree, luxuriant and fertile beyond all former precedent, and shortly to be transplanted to the paradise of God, a glorious and eternal monument of God's power and grace. Say whether, if this image be realized in our minds, we must not adore both the severity and the goodness of God, acknowledging equally the justice of the one, and the unbounded riches of the other?

Such is the character of this dispensation, which we now proceed to consider,

II. In *its final issue*—

It will be observed, that in the dispensation, as far as we have hitherto considered it, the sovereignty of God is most conspicuous. It was altogether of God's sovereign will and pleasure that he chose Abraham out of an idolatrous world, to make him the head and father of an elect seed. It was no less an act of sovereignty in God to confine his blessings to the line of Isaac, whilst Ishmael, an elder son, was overlooked. The same sovereignty was displayed, also, in the descendants of Isaac; Jacob the younger being chosen to the exclusion of Esau, "whilst they were yet in the womb, and consequently could have done neither good nor evil," to be the ground of God's future dispensations towards them. It was also purely of his own sovereign will and pleasure that God chose the Gentiles to inherit the blessings which the Jewish people had forfeited and lost. It is impossible to view this matter in any other light; and we must be as blind as the Jews themselves, if we do not see that we ourselves are monuments of God's sovereign grace, in that we behold the full radiance of the Sun of Righteousness, whilst on millions of our fellow-creatures not so much as one ray of his light has ever shone. But, whilst in these things we acknowledge the sovereignty of God, we hesitate not to declare, that, in their final issue, God will proceed altogether in a way of righteous retribution. This

I conceive to be the true way of reconciling those systems, which are supposed to be so opposite, and which have produced so much contention in the Church of God. I repeat it; In its commencement, every blessing is the fruit of free and sovereign grace; but in its termination, it is administered to us, *not in a way of merit* indeed, but on principles of perfect equity, according to our respective characters and attainments. And the subject before us will now furnish us with a fit occasion for maintaining the latter position, as we have already asserted and maintained the former.

God will ultimately deal with *us*, us *Gentiles*, according as we improve, or abuse, the privileges vouchsafed unto us. His goodness will operate to our ultimate advantage, only on the supposition that "we continue in his goodness; for otherwise, we also, like the Jews themselves, shall be cut off."

To enter into the full meaning of these words, let us consider what we ourselves should expect of a scion which we had engrafted on a fertile stock. We should expect it to produce fruit answerable to the advantage conferred upon it. In husbandry, indeed, we engraft a good scion on an inferior tree; whereas God engrafts a worthless scion on a good tree. But the ultimate effect is to be the same: we expect it to bring forth good fruit. Now what are the fruits which God's people of old produced? They may be comprehended in these three—repentance, faith, and obedience: and these may therefore most justly be expected of us. It may well be expected that we humble ourselves before God for all our former unfruitfulness, and mourn over all the corruptions of our nature, and all the evils of our lives. This we should do like the Prodigal: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Even if we had been as holy as Job himself, we must, like him, "abhor ourselves in dust and ashes." Under a sense of our guilt and desert of condemnation, we must cry to God for mercy, and "flee for refuge to the hope that

is set before us," even to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only Saviour of fallen man. We must renounce utterly every other hope; and desire, like St. Paul, "to be found in Christ, not having our own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God by faith in him." We must also surrender up ourselves to God, "living not to ourselves, but to Him who died for us and rose again." As the scion ceases to be connected with the stock from which it has been taken, and lives wholly by that into which it is engrafted, and for the use of him who has separated it for himself, so must the true Christian be, *in spirit*, dead to the world; and must live for that Saviour, to whose grace and favour he owes every blessing he enjoys.

But this is only a part of what is comprehended in the words of our text. By "*continuing* in his goodness," there is intimated a danger of apostasy, to which we are continually exposed. A scion, however favourable its situation may be, is exposed to storms and tempests, which may break it off; or to unfavourable seasons, which may prevent the ripening of its fruit. But the person that is engrafted into the good olive must suffer nothing to prevail against him, nor any thing to destroy his fruits. On the contrary, every thing that has a tendency to endanger his steadfastness, or impair his fertility, must cause him to cleave the more steadfastly to Christ, and to receive the more abundantly, out of his fulness, the grace which he stands in need of. In this way he must "endure even to the end, if ever he would be saved:" for it is only "by a patient continuance in well doing, that he can ever attain eternal life." This is fully declared in the passage before us: Yes, the Apostle Paul, who is so often and so justly referred to as maintaining the doctrines of grace, is certainly not a whit less strenuous in asserting our liability to fall and perish, if we be not constantly watching against temptation, and crying daily to our God to hold us up. "*Be not high-minded*," says he, "*but fear:* for if God spared not the natural branches,

take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God: on them that fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: *otherwise, thou also shalt be cut off.*" What can be plainer? And how do all human systems vanish before such declarations as these*! And says not our Lord also the same? Yes, precisely the same: "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned[f]." Here is precisely the same idea as in my text. Our Lord speaks of all his people as engrafted into him. The fruitful branches he purges and prunes, in order to render them more fruitful: but the unfruitful branches are broken off, and cast into the fire. Thus it is, and thus it shall be: and it becomes every person, who professes to have been engrafted into the true olive-tree, to look well to his ways: for if he improve not duly the Lord's goodness to him, or, having begun to do so, continue it not to the end, he shall surely perish; and the very profession that he has made, and the advantages he has enjoyed, will only aggravate his final condemnation. If an unbelieving Jew must perish for rejecting Christ, much

* It is worthy of remark, that whilst Calvinists complain of Arminians as unfair and unscriptural, in denying *personal*, though they admit *national*, election, they themselves are equally unfair and unscriptural in denying the danger of *personal* apostasy, whilst they admit it in reference to *churches* and *nations*. It is lamentable to see the plain statements of Scripture so unwarrantably set aside for the maintaining of human systems. Happy would it be for the Church, if these distinctions were buried by the consent of all parties, and the declarations of Holy Writ were adhered to by all, without prejudice or partiality!

The Author's views of this subject are simply these. All good is from God, dispensed by him in a way of sovereignty according to the counsels of his own will, and to the praise of the glory of his own grace. All evil, whether moral or penal, is from man; the moral, as resulting from his own free choice; the penal, as the just and necessary consequence of his sins. The Author has no doubt but that there is in God's blessed word a system: but it is a far broader system than either Calvinists or Arminians admit. His views of that system may be seen in the PREFACE to this Work.

[f] John xv. 6.

more shall the disobedient Christian, who "crucifies him afresh, and puts him to an open shame."

Towards *the Jews*, also, will God proceed upon the same principle of equitable retribution. In the days of old, he always returned in mercy to them, when they sought him with penitence and contrition: and at this very hour would he restore them to his favour, if they would "look on Him whom they have pierced, and mourn." The Apostle affirms this in our text, saying, "And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be graffed in again." We are apt to imagine that the blindness and obduracy of the Jews are utterly incurable. But there is nothing impossible with God: "He is as able to graff them in again," as ever he was to graff in scions from amongst the Gentiles. Indeed, whatever we may imagine to the contrary, the restoration of the Jews is a far easier matter than the conversion of the Gentiles: for the Gentiles are altogether ignorant of the very first principles of religion: they have every thing to learn: they do not so much as know that there is one supreme God; much less have they any idea how they are to find acceptance with him. But the Jews have a perfect knowledge of the unity of God: they are instructed also in relation to his will, having in their very hands a transcript of his law. They possess also the prophecies relating to the Messiah, whom they confidently expect. Nothing is wanting to them, but to have the veil taken from their hearts, so that they may see their prophecies accomplished in the Lord Jesus. The very moment their eyes are opened to behold him as the true Messiah, they will possess all that the most favoured of the Christian world possess; and in a moment, as on the day of Pentecost, will the work of graffing them into their primitive stock be effected. This we are apt to overlook; but we are told it plainly in our text: "If they abide not still in unbelief, they *shall* be graffed in: for God is able to graff them in again. For if thou, thou Gentile, wert cut out of the olive-tree which is *wild by nature*, and wert graffed, *contrary to nature*, into a good olive-

tree, HOW MUCH MORE shall these, which be *the natural branches*, be graffed into *their own* olive-tree?" No one need be told this in relation to the engrafting of a natural scion: it carries its own evidence along with it. If a scion will grow on a foreign stock, much more will it, if graffed into its own parent stock. Such, then, is the advantage which the Jews possess over every other people upon earth. It is to their own stem that they are to be restored. The recollection, therefore, of what God has done in the conversion of the Gentiles should dispel all our fears in reference to the Jews, and encourage our efforts to restore them to God.

But, before we proceed to enforce this duty, it will be proper to bring the subject home to ourselves; and to urge on all *a due improvement of the privileges which we ourselves enjoy*.

We all profess to be branches of the good olive-tree: and we are entitled to regard ourselves in this light precisely as the Jews of old did, and as our blessed Lord has taught us to do, when he spake of himself as the true vine. But he distinguished between fruitful branches which were approved by him, and barren branches which were to be broken off and burned. Consequently, our external privileges will be of little service to us, if they be not improved in a way of fruitfulness. Let us, therefore, examine our fruit from day to day, and see whether it be such as the goodness of our God entitles him to expect? Let us inquire, whether *in heart*, as well as in profession, we are separated from the wild and worthless olive, on which we originally grew. We all acknowledge, in our Catechism, that we were, "by nature, children of wrath;" and that, at the time of entering into our baptismal engagements, we were "made the children of grace." Let us inquire, therefore, whether this engrafting have really taken place, not in profession only, but by an actual union of our souls with Christ? Are we living on him, and receiving daily, out of his fulness, such communications of grace as are really productive of the fruit which he himself, during his

sojourning on earth, brought forth? In him we find a perfect deadness to the world and all its vanities. Is there the same in us? It was his meat to do the will of his heavenly Father. Is there "the same mind" in us? Have we a resemblance to HIM in our whole spirit and conduct? and are we "walking in all things as HE walked?" I ask not, whether we are perfect; for there is imperfection in the best of men: but, are we aiming at perfection, and panting after it, and labouring to be "pure, even as Christ was pure?" If we be *living* branches of the true olive, we must of necessity, in these matters, resemble Christ; and to imagine ourselves *vitally* united to him, whilst in the general course of our lives we bear fruit altogether different from his, is fatally to deceive our own souls. We know assuredly, that, as Christ inspected the barren fig-tree, and denounced a curse against it on account of its barrenness, so will the heavenly Husbandman inspect our fruit, and deal with us according to it. It is in vain, therefore, to deceive ourselves: for his judgment will stand; and it will be according to truth. *We* may "call darkness light, and evil good:" but *he* will not do so: and if, notwithstanding all his warnings, we will continue to expect his approbation in any other way than that of continued fruitfulness in the fruits of righteousness, we have nothing to expect but a speedy and everlasting excision. Let any one go to Shiloh, and see what the Lord did for the wickedness of his people there: or let him go to Palestine and the Seven Churches of Asia, and see what an unfruitful olive has reason to expect. Shall we say, 'But this was done to Churches only, and not to individuals?' What, I ask, are Churches, but congregated individuals? And who is authorized so to limit what God has not limited; or rather, I should say, Who will presume to deny what God has so frequently and so plainly affirmed? Woe be to that man who shall rest his soul on any such distinction as this! I declare, before Almighty God, and in his sacred name, that every soul amongst you who either continues barren, or, under any

circumstances whatever, ceases to be fruitful after the example of his Lord and Saviour, "shall be cut off," and cast into everlasting fire. This warning is, in the first place, given by the Apostle to the *Christian* Church: and let every one of *us* receive it as addressed to his own soul in particular. And may God of his infinite mercy so impress it on our minds, that we may never cease to tremble at it; and seek that fruitfulness which will be our best evidence of union with Christ, and the surest pledge of our ultimate acceptance with him!

Having thus endeavoured to enforce a due improvement of our own privileges, permit me now, in a respectful manner, yet with Christian fidelity, to ask, whether we be not called, by a sense of gratitude to God and of compassion for man, *to make somewhat of an united effort for the restoration of the Jewish people to the privileges they have forfeited?*

We have heard from God himself, that the obstacles to this are far less than those which have been already overcome in reference to the Gentiles; so that there is no just ground of discouragement on that head. He who has been able to graff in the branches of the wild-olive, can easily re-instate the natural branches: and in the same way that he effected the one, he will effect the other. It was by the instrumentality of holy men of old that God wrought effectually on the Gentile world: and it is by exertions of a similar kind that he will restore the Jewish people[s]. We know what self-denying efforts were made by the Apostles and the primitive Christians for our salvation: and such are the exertions which we should make in behalf of our Jewish brethren. Indeed, if it were possible, we are bound by tenfold greater obligations to labour for them, than ever their ancestors were for us: for we actually stand in their place, which *has been vacated by them, in order that we might fill it.* Hear what is spoken in the chapter before us: "Thou wilt say then, *The branches were broken off, that I might be graffed in.*

[s] Isai lxii. 10—12.

WELL:" 'it is true,' says the Apostle: 'and however mysterious the fact may appear, I cannot deny it.' What a view, then, is here opened to us! The Jews were broken off, in order that we Gentiles might be graffed in. What, I would ask, should be our feelings at the sight of a Jew? Should we not be filled with compassion towards him? and should not the contemplation of our own privileges cause our bowels to yearn over him? Should not that truth be instantly brought to our minds, "Thou wast broken off, that I might be graffed in;" and I am occupying, as it were, the place which thou hast vacated for me? Who can entertain for a moment such a reflection as this, and not pant for an opportunity to bring him to a renewed enjoyment of his lost inheritance? Methinks, every one of us, surveying the branches scattered over the face of the earth, and contemplating God's assured purpose to restore them to himself, should say, "God helping me, I will never cease to labour till I have been the happy means of reinstating one withered branch in its own olive-tree. For this I will labour: for this I will pray: for this I will combine my exertions with others, that, by united efforts, we may accomplish what cannot be attained by individual exertion." Is not this reasonable? Is not this what God may well expect at our hands? Is it not a duty which we should have performed long ago? Is not the deplorable state of the Jewish people at this time in a great measure owing to the grievous neglect of Christians, who, for seventeen hundred years, have acquiesced in their rejection from God, without any serious efforts for their restoration to him? As for the excuses which we make for this neglect, we know, and our own consciences tell us, that they are only a cloak for our own supineness. If we even believed the impracticability of human efforts, should we not, at least, implore for them the interposition of their God? But our prayers in secret have been as true an index of our minds towards them, as our efforts in public. Let us take shame to ourselves on account of our past neglect; and let us now address ourselves

to our duty; determined, at least, to obtain this testimony both from God and from our own consciences, that, whether successful or not in our labours for them, "We have done what we could." Our every effort will be pleasing to God: and, though he should refuse to confer on us the honour we affect, of raising up the tabernacle of David that is broken down, he will at least accept our pious inclinations, and, in the presence of the whole assembled universe, will say to each of us, "Thou hast done well, in that it was in thy heart."

MDCCCXCIX.

THE FUTURE SALVATION OF ALL ISRAEL.

Rom. xi. 25—27. *I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.*

IT is surprising, how indifferent even pious Christians are on the subject of the future restoration of the Jews. Though the Scriptures speak so much of it, the generality are contended to be altogether ignorant of God's designs respecting them. Yet, in the midst of their ignorance, they are as decided in their sentiments on this subject as if they had made it their peculiar study, and were able to explain all the prophecies relating to it. Some will tell us, confidently, that the time for the conversion of Israel is not yet come; and that, when it shall be come, it shall be effected by miracle: and that, consequently, it is both unnecessary and presumptuous in us to attempt it. But, "brethren, I would not have you ignorant of this mystery;" more especially because it is in this chapter so plainly and so fully unfolded to our view. To aid you in contemplating the state of the Jews, I will endeavour to point out,

I. The period allotted for their present blindness—

The blindness of the Jewish people is most awful—

[Their prophecies respecting the Messiah are most clear[a] ——— And the accomplishment of them in the Lord Jesus Christ is most strongly marked in the New Testament ——— Yet is there "a veil upon their hearts;" so that they cannot see either what the prophecies imported, or how they are accomplished[b]. This, indeed, is "happened to" that nation only "in part." "A remnant" there are, and ever have been, whose eyes have been opened to see the light which shines around them: but "the rest are and have been blinded," according to that prediction respecting them, "God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, unto this day[c]."]

This blindness will last "till the fulness of the Gentiles come in[d]"—

[These words are much misunderstood. Some suppose "the fulness of the Gentiles" to mean the completion of the period allotted for the continuance of the Roman empire; whilst others think it refers rather to the period when all the Gentiles shall have been brought into the fold of Christ. I conceive that neither of these is the true import of the words; but that they speak of the time when the general conversion of the Gentiles shall *commence*. It cannot mean the *completion* of that great work; because *the fulness of the Jews will precede that*[e]. But when the Gentiles *begin* on a more extended scale to embrace the Gospel, then shall the veil be taken from the hearts of the Jews also; and they shall, if not universally, yet with few exceptions, be converted to the faith, and receive the Lord Jesus Christ as their Messiah, and worship him as their God[f].]

Such is the change which, at the allotted period, shall take place; and such,

II. The event that awaits them at the termination of it—

Here let me call your attention to,

1. The event itself—

["All Israel shall be saved." Hitherto, even in the best

[a] Refer to the most striking; and particularly the 53d chapter of Isaiah.

[b] 2 Cor. iii. 15. [c] ver. 8.

[d] εἰσέλθῃ, *shall be fully come*. [e] ver. 12.

[f] That πλήρωμα here, and πληρωθῶσι in Luke xxi. 24, refer to the *commencement*, rather than to the close, of a period. See, in the Greek, John vii. 8. Luke ix. 51. Acts ii. 1.

ages, there have been but few that truly feared God: the great mass of the people have been ungodly; and the saints have been but as a remnant of them. But in that day "a spirit of grace and of supplication will be poured out upon them in a more abundant measure; and they will look on Him whom they have pierced, and mourn, even as one mourneth for his only son[g]:" and "they will all fear the Lord, from the least of them even unto the greatest of them:" yea, so universal shall be the prevalence of real piety amongst them, that "every vessel in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness to the Lord; and there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of Hosts[h]."]

2. The certainty of it—

[It is here *assured* to them *by a special promise;* and *that promise* is *ratified by an unchangeable covenant.* The promise is recorded by the Prophet Isaiah[i]; and, with a slight but unimportant variation, cited by the Apostle. That this promise had not been fully accomplished in the apostolic age, is evident, from the way in which it is cited by the Apostle: for it is clearly considered by him as referring to a period yet future, a period when "ALL Israel shall be saved." What the Lord Jesus Christ has already effected among them, and what he has wrought also in the Gentile world, shews what he will do at the appointed season: he will, by the power of his word and the effectual operation of his Spirit, "turn away all ungodliness from Jacob;" and make them "a holy nation, a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

This is confirmed to them by an everlasting covenant. In the first covenant, the promises were all conditional; and being violated by them, it was altogether annulled. But by the new and better covenant, of which Christ is the Surety, God engages to "write his laws in their hearts, and to put them in their inward parts:" and not only "not to depart from them himself, but to put his fear in their hearts, that they may not depart from him." Thus, at the same time that he takes away their former sins by forgiveness, he will prevent the recurrence of them by his grace, and secure to them the full blessings of his salvation[k].]

Let me, in CONCLUSION, call your attention to "this mystery." Consider,

1. Its aspect on the Jews—

[How melancholy their present state of "blindness!"——— and how glorious the prospects held out to them! ———]

[g] Zech. xii. 10. [h] Zech. xiv. 20, 21. [i] Isai. lix. 20.
[k] Compare Jer. xxxi. 31—34. with Heb. viii. 8—12.

2. Its proper effect upon your own minds—

[It is lamentable to observe how "wise" the generality of Christians are "in their own conceits," in reference to this matter: how contemptuously they speak of the Jews, as if *they* were *by nature* worse than ourselves; and as if they were never again to be restored to the favour of their God. But, if we bear in mind what they once were, and what they are yet destined to become, we shall regard them with veneration, for their fathers' sakes, and seek their welfare with earnestness for their own sakes — — —]

MDCCCC.

THE JEWS STILL BELOVED OF GOD, FOR THEIR FATHERS' SAKE.

Rom. xi. 28, 29. *As concerning the Gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.*

IT is strange, that, when so much is spoken in the Holy Scriptures respecting the Jews, they should occupy so little the attention of the Christian world. We see them as monuments of God's indignation; but never inquire, or but superficially inquire, either into the reasons of his conduct towards them, or into his ulterior designs respecting them. Were we to say that they were enemies to God *for our sakes*, we should be told that it was impossible: and were we to speak of them as yet objects of *God's love*, we should so astonish our hearers, as to make them cry out, in the language of Ezekiel's auditors, "Ah, Lord God, doth he not speak parables[a]?" But the whole of their present state is a "mystery[b]," a great and stupendous mystery[c], into which we shall do well to search. For the assisting of you in this inquiry, I have selected the words which we have just read; wherein are declared,

I. The mystery of God in relation to his ancient people—

[a] Ezek. xx. 49. [b] ver. 25. [c] ver. 33.

1. "As concerning the Gospel, they are enemies for our sakes"—

[That they are enemies to God and his Christ, has been abundantly manifested, by their conduct towards all who prophesied of Christ; by their crucifying of the Lord of Glory, when he had put himself in their power; and by their determined rejection of his Gospel, when, with such abundant evidence of its divine origin, it was preached unto them. Unhappily, we have still but too plain proofs that this enmity continues unabated. They hate the Gospel precisely as they did in the apostolic age, and reject its gracious overtures with disdain.

Now, whence is it that God has suffered their enmity to rise to such an height, and to rankle in their bosoms with such inveterate malignity? The Apostle tells us, He has suffered it "for our sakes." But how "for our sakes?" What interest can we have in it? This we will endeavour to explain.

God originally chose the Jews for his peculiar people, and vouchsafed to reveal himself exclusively to them. When, by their abuse of his blessings, they had "provoked him to become their enemy[d]," he determined to make himself known to the Gentiles, and to transfer to them the blessings which had been so wantonly despised. Therefore he cast off the Jews, and adopted the Gentiles in their place.

But it may be asked, Why should he cast off the Jews, in order to make room for the Gentiles? Was not the heart of the infinitely gracious Jehovah capable of embracing both? And might not the blessings of salvation, like the light and warmth of the sun, be enjoyed by both at once, without any loss or injury to either? I answer, God, no doubt, *could* have admitted both to enjoy his favour at the same time: but, for reasons best known to himself, he did not see fit to do so. He had displayed his sovereignty in the choice of the Jews: and now he would glorify the same perfection in the choice of the Gentiles also. His grace is his own; and he will dispense it to whom he will, and at what time he will, and in what measure he will; "nor will he give account to us of any of his matters." It is not for us to say to him, "What doest thou?" It is our part to acquiesce, with all humility and gratitude, in his sovereign dispensations; and, in reference to them all, to say, with our blessed Lord, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, *for so it seemed good in thy sight*[e]." Having, then,

[d] Isai. lxiii. 10. [e] Matt. xi. 25, 26.

determined to introduce *us* to the blessings of salvation, he suffered *them* to reject these blessings, that so a way might be made for us, to occupy their place, and to possess their inheritance.

This does, I confess, appear a strange and almost incredible statement: and, if it were founded on one particular expression of the Scriptures, we might well doubt the justness of it. But this truth is so often repeated, that we cannot possibly entertain a doubt respecting it. The Apostle tells us, that, "through their fall, *salvation is come unto the Gentiles*:" that their fall was *the riches of the world*; that the diminishing of them was *the riches of the Gentiles*; and that the casting away of them was *the reconciling of the world*[f]. Thus is it unequivocally declared, that the communication of salvation to us was *the effect and consequence* of their rejection. Shall I go farther than this, and say, that the communication of salvation to us was also *the end* of their rejection? Yes; mysterious as this is, it is unquestionably true: for the Apostle acquiesces in this very position as undeniable: "Thou wilt say, then, the branches were broken off, that I might be graffed in. Well: because of unbelief they were broken off[g]:" that is, I acknowledge the truth of your position; though, for the vindication of God's character, I must say, that his breaking of them off from the stock was not a *mere* act of sovereignty on God's part: they deserved it richly; and brought it on themselves by their own obstinacy in unbelief: nevertheless, you are right in what you say respecting God's intentions towards you: *he did break them off, that you may be graffed in upon their stock*: and the whole of this mysterious dispensation towards them has been permitted "FOR YOUR SAKE."

But think not that they are cast off for ever: for,]

2. "As concerning the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes"—

[The Jews were chosen in Abraham their father; and all his posterity were comprehended in the promises made to him: not indeed in their individual capacity, (for then no one of them, not even Judas himself, could have ever perished,) but nationally, and in their collective capacity; and to them, sooner or later, shall all the promises be fulfilled. The rejection of the great body of the nation had taken place when the Apostle wrote this epistle: but yet he said, that "even at that present time there was among them a remnant according to the election of grace[h]." And so may we say at this time; "There is a remnant," whom God, from time to time, is gathering in from among them, and especially through the

[f] ver. 11, 12, 15. [g] ver. 19, 20. [h] ver. 5.

instrumentality of the Hebrew New Testament, which to a great extent, is now circulating among them in different quarters of the globe: and, as in the covenant made with Abraham, not *all* his descendants were comprehended, but only those who should proceed from Isaac and from Jacob; so in the loins of those who are yet alive are millions of millions comprehended; and of them also an elect remnant. And who shall say how many of them "are ordained to eternal life?" Sure we are, that they will be numerous as the stars of heaven; or rather, "as the sands upon the sea-shore, innumerable." At whatever period these shall come into the world, God will call them to the knowledge of himself; and give them, if not the possession of the land of Canaan, yet the possession of that better inheritance, which Canaan typified, and which was assured to them in the promises that were made to Abraham. Those promises were not made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for themselves only, but for their seed: and "not a jot or tittle of those promises shall ever fail;" all shall be fulfilled in their season: and from respect to the fathers to whom they were made, are the present generation of their descendants yet loved; and to the latest generations shall the elect among them be loved, even as the fathers themselves were loved. Thus, "as touching the election, are that people," notwithstanding all their enmity, "yet beloved for their fathers' sakes;" as God has said: "I know the thoughts that I think towards you; thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end[i]."]

All this is secured by,

II. The determined purpose of his mind towards them—

Exceeding strong is the assertion with which the Apostle confirms the foregoing declarations. The general and unqualified manner in which the assertion is made, will lead us to notice it,

I. As a general truth—

[Certain it is, that "God's gifts and calling are without repentance." Whatever God has given, of spiritual and eternal blessings, he has given in consequence of "his own eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began[k]. The favoured persons were not originally chosen on account of any superior goodness that was, or would be, in them[l]; but they were "predestinated to the enjoyment of those blessings, according to the purpose of Him who worketh

[i] Jer. xxix. 11. [k] 2 Tim. i. 9. [l] Deut. ix. 6.

all things after the counsel of his own will[m]." These are strong expressions, I confess: but they are the declarations of God himself; and they reflect the strongest light on the subject we are now considering. For God is an unchangeable Being; as he has said: "I the Lord change not[n]."

That there have been occasions on which he has been said to "repent," I acknowledge: for we are told that he "repented he had made man[o]:" as also, "that he had raised Eli to the priestly office[p];" and, that he had made Saul king over Israel[q]. On one occasion, God himself says, to those whom, after having brought them out from Egypt, he had determined to exclude from the promised land, "Ye shall know my breach of promise[r]." But we must distinguish between *his purposes* and *his dispensations*. His dispensations he may, and does, change: but he changes them *agreeably to his eternal purpose*, which was, to continue his favour to his people, whilst they should walk worthy of it; and to withdraw it from them, when they should have so abused it, as to render any longer forbearance on his part injurious to the honour of his moral government. But *in himself* "there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning[s]:" "nor will he ever forsake his people, for his great name's sake; because it hath pleased him to make them his people[t]." "Whom he loveth, he will love unto the end[u]:" and of those whom he hath given to his Son, he will suffer "not so much as one to be lost, or ever to be plucked out of his hand[x]."

But let us more particularly mark this truth,]

2. As bearing upon the point immediately before us—

[The Prophet Micah marks with very peculiar accuracy the distinction between God's favour as *promised* to Abraham, and as *conferred* on Jacob. To Abraham it was altogether "*mercy;*" because it was promised by God to him and his seed freely: but to Jacob it was "*truth;*" because it was an accomplishment of the promise previously made: "Thou wilt perform the *truth to Jacob*, and the *mercy to Abraham*, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old[y]."

Now the promises made to Abraham, and his *believing* seed, were all ratified with an oath, and confirmed with an everlasting covenant[z]: and God gave this double assurance for the more abundant consolation of his people; as the Apostle

[m] Eph. i. 11. [n] Mal. iii. 6. [o] Gen. vi. 6.
[p] 1 Sam. ii. 30. [q] 1 Sam. xv. 11, 28, 29.
[r] Num. xiv. 34. [s] Jam. i. 17. [t] 1 Sam. xii. 22.
[u] John xiii. 1. [x] John xvii. 11, 12, and x. 28, 29.
[y] Mic. vii. 20. [z] Heb. vi. 13, 14.

informs us: "God willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise *the immutability of his counsel*, confirmed it with an oath; that by two immutable things, in which *it was impossible for God to lie*, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us[a]. On this, then, we rely, even on the immutability of God's covenant; and from this we infer the certainty that God's ancient people will be restored to him in due season. Notwithstanding their present disconsolate condition, God's "eye is yet over them for good;" and, notwithstanding their inveterate hostility to the very name of Christ, he still "loves them;" and never will repent of the gifts he has bestowed upon them, or of the calling wherewith he has called them: for "He is not a man, that he should lie; nor the son of man, that he should repent[b]." We may say therefore with the Apostle, in the preceding context, "ALL Israel *shall* be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion, the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for *this is God's covenant with them*, when he shall take away their sins[c]."]

I now confidently make my APPEAL to you; and ask,

1. Do we not find here a just *occasion for gratitude?*

[We admire, as well we may, the blessedness of God's chosen people in the days of David and Solomon, especially when compared with the blindness and ignorance of the heathen nations around them. But far more elevated is our state at this day, inasmuch as the effusion of the Holy Spirit upon us is more abundant[d], and our advantages for fruitfulness are proportionably increased. Do but reflect on your situation as graffed on the good olive-tree; and look upon the stock, the wretched, worthless stock, from which you have been taken: shall not this mercy fill you with unutterable joy? Verily, if you do not bless, and magnify, and adore the goodness of your God, "the very stones will cry out against you."]

2. Have we not here, also, a loud *call for our compassion?*

[Come, and survey the ground on which the olive-tree is growing: see how it is strewed with branches, with dead and withered branches, that have been broken off from the stem: and then consider that they have been reduced to this state "*for your sakes*," and "broken off *on purpose that you might be graffed in*[e]." Look on them, I say, and tell me whether your bowels should not yearn over them; and whether you ought not to exert yourselves to the utmost in their behalf?

[a] Heb. vi. 17, 18. [b] Num. xxiii. 19. [c] ver. 26, 27.
[d] John vii. 39. Tit. iii. 6. [e] ver. 19, 20.

Did we but bear in mind this mysterious truth, methinks it would be impossible for us to view a Jew and not weep over him, and pour out our souls in fervent intercession for him, and labour to the uttermost to effect his restoration to the Divine favour.]

3. Is there not also abundant *encouragement for our exertions?*

[That "God is able to graff in again" the natural branches, we can have no doubt. And is he not engaged to do so, by promise and by oath? Why, then, do we not seek to be instrumental in this blessed work? If we believe that they are yet "beloved of *God*," should we not make them objects of *our* love? Come, let us do this: let us say with ourselves, 'God helping me, I will never cease to work, till I have been instrumental in graffing in again some *one* branch. I see that there is nothing but unbelief that separates them from God; and I will, by every means in my power, endeavour to convince *one*, that Jesus is the Christ, the Saviour of the world.' Would we but all adopt this resolution, and implore help from God to carry it into effect, what might we not hope for in the space of a few years? Surely God would hear the united prayers of his people, and favour their united efforts with success. If only we would "give him no rest," and "take no rest ourselves," till we had succeeded in our efforts, we should soon prevail, and behold Jerusalem once more a praise in the earth[f]."][g]

[f] Isai. lxii. 1, 6, 7.

[g] If there be a collection in aid of their conversion, the audience might be urged to shew the measure of their love by the extent of their donations.

MDCCCCI.

THE GOSPEL GIVEN TO US AS A DEPOSIT FOR THE JEWS.

Rom. xi. 30, 31. *As ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.*

ONE can scarcely conceive how such a chapter as that before us should be in the hands of Christians, and be read by them from time to time, and yet the great subject of the restoration of the Jews, and of their union with the Christian Church, be as little

known as if no information whatever had been given respecting it in the Bible. Till of late, it should seem as if there had been as thick a veil upon the hearts of Christians, in relation to it, as there has been upon the hearts of the Jewish people in relation to Christianity itself. Methinks the words which I have just read to you, if there had been no other, were sufficient to unfold to us the whole plan of Divine Providence in relation to this matter. For in them we see,

I. The mysterious way in which God has dispensed his blessings to mankind—

Mark the plan, as it is here developed—

[The whole world having departed from God, they were, with the exception of one family, overwhelmed by an universal deluge. The surviving family soon followed the footsteps of their ancestors; and the whole world, in the space of less than five hundred years, was again involved in darkness and idolatry. It pleased God then to give a new revelation of himself to one single individual, and to confine the knowledge of himself, not to his descendants generally, but to his descendants in the line of one particular son. But that revelation being merely oral, it was preserved only by tradition. Then, after about four hundred and thirty years more, God, for the first time, vouchsafed to man a written revelation. Yet was this written word confined to that single people. The rest of the world, for the space of four thousand years, were left without any written instruction from on high, and were given up to the delusions of their own hearts. Our Lord himself said he was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; and he forbad his Disciples to enter into any city of the Samaritans, to instruct *them*. But at last, when this nation had so abused the light afforded them, as to reject and crucify their Messiah, God took it away from them, and imparted it to the Gentile world, who hitherto had lain in darkness and the shadow of death. Yet, alas! it is to but a small part of the Gentile world that this light is come, notwithstanding it has shined these eighteen hundred years. But it is God's purpose that, in due season, it shall spread over the face of the whole globe; and that they, to whom the knowledge of his will has been now committed, shall be his instruments for communicating it to all the rest of mankind, both Jews and Gentiles.]

Now I call the whole of this mysterious—

[St. Paul calls it so, in the chapter before us[a]: and so

[a] ver. 25.

great a mystery did he consider it, that, in the contemplation of it, he exclaimed, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out[b]!"

But consider these four things: the long delay; the partial bestowment; the subsequent transfer; the final restoration: and every part of it will appear an inscrutable mystery.

That God should leave the world in ignorance for two thousand years—that he should then make himself known to one man only, and confine the knowledge of himself for two thousand more years in one particular branch of that man's family—that then he should cause the candlestick to be removed from that people; and be set up amongst the idolatrous Gentiles, who had been left to themselves for four thousand years—that eighteen hundred years more should elapse, and the light be not yet spread amongst the Gentiles generally, or restored to the Jews—who does not see, in this whole dispensation, the sovereignty, the uncontrollable sovereignty, of the Most High, who imparts to every one so much only as he himself sees fit, and *that* too in the time and manner which seems best to his unerring wisdom? The Apostle illustrates this by an olive-tree, the branches of which were broken off, that others might be engrafted on it, and that, at a future period, they might be engrafted again on their own olive-tree[c]. And, truly, in the whole of this mysterious appointment we must acquiesce, saying, "Even so, Father; for so it hath seemed good in thy sight[d]."]

But, though we cannot comprehend this mystery, we know, for certain,

II. The design of God in it—

This is two-fold;

1. To provoke the Jews to jealousy—

[Moses himself, who gave to the Jews God's written word, told them, that they would, by their obstinate unbelief, provoke God to withdraw his mercy from them, and to transfer it to the Gentile world: "They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God: they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation[e]." This passage St. Paul expressly cites in the preceding context[f]; and informs the Jews, that God, having in vain dealt with them in the way of mercy and of judgment, was now anxious to try another way, and to influence them through

[b] ver. 33. [c] ver. 17—24. [d] Matt. xi. 26.
[e] Deut. xxxii. 21. [f] Rom. x. 19.

the operation of another principle, the principle of *envy*; if by any means he might prevail upon them to turn unto him. And, doubtless, *this* was well calculated to impress their minds with penitential sorrow for their past sins, and with an ardent desire to be restored to his favour. They saw all that their most favoured saints had ever enjoyed now transferred to the Gentile world, whom they had been accustomed to despise as dogs; and pardon, and peace, and holiness, and glory, now imparted to a people whom they had deemed incapable of such blessings; whilst they themselves were given up to judicial blindness and obduracy. True, indeed, this operated rather to increase their anger, than to produce humility: but God's end was mercy; though they, through their incorrigible perverseness, made it only an occasion of bringing down upon themselves yet heavier judgments. This is a point which we are too apt to overlook. God never intended finally to cast them off, but only to reject them for a season; until, by beholding his mercy vouchsafed to the idolatrous Gentiles, they shall be prevailed upon to humble themselves before him, and to implore a restoration of their forfeited inheritance:—"I say, then, have they stumbled, that they should fall (for ever)? God forbid: but rather, through their fall, salvation is come unto the Gentiles, *to provoke them to jealousy*[g]."]

2. To provoke the Christian world to love—

[Mark with care the expression in my text: "They, the Jews, have now not believed, *that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy*[h]." God might, if he had seen fit, have admitted the Gentiles to a participation of his blessings in conjunction with the Jews. But this was not the plan which he, in his unerring wisdom, had ordained. He determined to manifest his displeasure towards the Jews, on account of their rejection of the Messiah; but at the same time to shew mercy to them through the instrumentality of the despised Gentiles. To the Gentiles he gave a yet clearer and fuller revelation than that which he had given to the Jews: and he gave it, not for their benefit only, but *as a sacred deposit for the Jews*, and *as a talent to be improved for their especial use*. In bestowing the Gospel on the Gentiles, he said, in fact, 'Here is salvation

[g] ver. 11.

[h] Some, on account of the construction of the Greek, and the position of the word ἵνα, have translated the passage differently. But that position of the word ἵνα is common in St. Paul's writings (see 1 Cor. ix. 15. 2 Cor. ii. 4. Gal. ii. 10. Eph. iii. 17.): and, beyond a doubt, our translators have given the true import of the passage. The other translation would destroy the parallelism altogether, and, in fact, the sense also.

for you: but, remember, you must not confine it to yourselves. You must make use of it for the instruction and salvation of the Jews. From you I withheld the light which I bestowed on the Jews: but I do not intend that the light which I am now bestowing upon you should be withheld from them: on the contrary, I purpose that it shall be imparted to them: and I intend to make you my channel of communication to them. See to it, therefore, that you improve this mercy aright, and that you labour incessantly for their good; for I grant this mercy to you, not for your own benefit only, (though, doubtless, it is for yourselves in the first instance,) but for them also, *that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.*'

Thus, in the whole of this dispensation, God has acted in a sovereign way, yet also in a way of mercy;—of mercy to the Jews, whom he would provoke to jealousy; and of mercy to the Gentiles, whom he would provoke to love.]

Permit me now to ASK,

1. What use have you made of this Gospel for yourselves?—

[Have you "believed it?" Have you, by faith in it, been brought to God? Have you been led to admire and adore the goodness of God, in that, when he withheld his blessings from his own highly-favoured and peculiar people, he conferred them upon *you*, who were alike unworthy of them, and might well have been left to perish, on account of your abuse of the light with which he had favoured you, and which, small as it was, was sufficient to acquit or to condemn you, according as you conducted yourselves in reference to it? In a word, have you seen the "mercy" of God, as revealed in the Gospel? and are you transported with it, as offering "mercy" to your souls? Does that "mercy," as bought for you by the precious blood of Christ, form the one ground of all your hopes, and the one spring of all your joys? Remember, if the feebler light vouchsafed to Abraham, and Moses, and David, wrought so powerfully on them, as to guide their feet into the paths they trod, much more should your superior light elevate your souls, and transform you into the very image of your God — — —]

2. What use have you made of the Gospel for your Jewish brethren?—

[Alas! how little have any of us answered the end for which the Gospel has been committed to us, or ever considered *the design of God* in bestowing it upon us! It is perfectly surprising, that for so many centuries we should have altogether overlooked our Jewish brethren: as if God himself

had never given us any charge respecting them; or rather, as if his charge had been, "Into any city of the Jews enter ye NOT:" when, in fact, the command has never been repealed, "Preach my Gospel, *to the Jews first*, and also to the Gentiles." Indeed, my brethren, great guilt attaches to us on this account. What would you yourselves say to your steward, if, when you had committed to him a sum of money for the relief of your distressed neighbours, he had withheld from them your bounty, and had expended it altogether on himself? Yet *that* were no crime, in comparison of that of which you have been guilty; because the loss occasioned by his dishonesty could, at the worst, only issue in the temporal death of those whom he defrauded; whereas the negligence of the Christian world has issued in the death of men's souls, yea, of millions of immortal souls, who, if the means which God has put into our hands for their good had been duly improved, might have been saved with an everlasting salvation. Let there be an end of this neglect, my beloved brethren; and now begin, with all assiduity and diligence, to redeem the time that you have lost. Truly, you owe much to your Jewish brethren: and I call upon you to pay your arrears; ("for their debtors ye are" to a vast amount[1];) and now, by your personal efforts, or through the instrumentality of others, impart to them the mercy which you yourselves have received. Nor do I suggest this as a matter of advice merely, but as an absolute command from God himself. *It is not a thing left to your option. You have a trust; and you must discharge it.* I call upon you, then, if you have any sense of the mercy vouchsafed to your own souls, to act as faithful stewards to your God, in dispensing mercy to his "beloved," though suffering and out-cast people.]

[1] Rom. xv. 27.

MDCCCCII.

THE UNSEARCHABLENESS OF GOD'S WAYS.

Rom. xi. 33. *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*

ON whatever side we look, we are surrounded with mysteries; yea, we are a mystery to ourselves. The works of creation, and providence, and redemption, are all mysterious; and the more we know of them, the more we shall be disposed to exclaim, "O the depths!" Perhaps no one of the children of men

ever had so deep an insight into the great mysteries of the Gospel as the Apostle Paul: yet, when he had unravelled them in a way that no other man ever did, he was constrained to acknowledge, that there were in the Gospel, treasures unexplored, and mines unsearchable, and riches of wisdom that far surpassed the conceptions of any finite intelligence. This is a truth which we ought to be well acquainted with: for, till we are made sensible of it, we shall never regard the Gospel with that reverence and admiration which ought ever to exist in our minds towards it. Let us then contemplate the unsearchableness of God's "judgments," that is, of the means he has appointed for our salvation, and the incomprehensibility of his "ways," by which he dispenses that salvation to fallen man.

He is altogether incomprehensible,

I. In the way he has provided for the salvation of men—

Consider,

1. His sending his only dear Son to be the surety and substitute of fallen man—

[From having been early instructed in that great mystery, the incarnation of the Son of God, we hear of it without emotion: but when we contemplate, that the Creator of heaven and earth became a creature, in the likeness of sinful flesh; that in order to his being formed immaculate, he was born of a pure Virgin through the operation of the Holy Ghost; and that, being so born, he did actually become a curse for us, and "bear our iniquities in his own body on the tree;" we are lost in wonder. We are not only at a loss to comprehend it, but seem as if we could not believe it; so strange, so almost impossible, does it appear: and if it were not confirmed in such a way that it is impossible to withhold our belief, we should be ready to account it blasphemy to assert such a fact, and madness to believe it. But the fact is so: and as, at the first revelation of it, it filled all heaven with wonder, so will it do to all eternity: "the height and depth and length and breadth of the love" displayed in it, will never be explored.]

2. His saving men by a righteousness not their own—

[This seems no less unsearchable than the former. Supposing that God had sent his Son to expiate our guilt, we should at least expect that he would require man to work out a righteousness for himself, and to obtain salvation by his obedience to the law. But, blessed be his name! he has not required any such thing. He requires men indeed to be righteous, and to obey his law: nor will he save any man who does not in these respects endeavour to fulful his will. But he does not require man to fulfil his law, in order to work out a righteousness whereby he may be justified: on the contrary, he requires men to renounce all dependence on their own righteousness, and to seek for acceptance solely through the righteousness of Christ. A perfect righteousness of our own we could not have: and therefore God sent his own Son to obey the precepts of the law, as well as to suffer its penalties, and by his own obedience unto death, to "bring in an everlasting righteousness," "which should be unto all, and upon all, them that believe." Thus the vilest sinner in the universe, the very instant he truly believes in Christ, becomes possessed of a righteousness commensurate with the utmost demands of God's perfect law, a righteousness in which he stands before God without spot or blemish. How wonderful is this! how inconceivable to any finite capacity, that God *should*, I had almost said that God *could*, appoint *such* a way for the restoration and salvation of fallen man!]

3. His bringing out of man's fall more glory to himself, and more good to man, than if man had never fallen—

[The dishonour done to God by the fall of man was beyond all conception great: yet is the honour done to him by man's recovery infinitely greater. True it is, God would have been equally glorious in himself, if man had never been restored: but his perfections would never have been so displayed in the sight of his creatures. It would never have been known that mercy constituted any part of his character; whilst it is, in reality, that perfection in which he most delights. Nor would his justice have appeared so awful in the destruction of the whole human race, as it appears in inflicting death upon his only dear Son, when standing in the place of sinners. But suppose that *mercy* might have been exercised towards sinners in some other way; how could *justice* have borne any part in their salvation? But now justice is as much engaged on the side of a believing penitent as mercy itself; and the penitent, whilst he entreats God to be *merciful* to *himself*, may entreat him also to be *just* to *his Beloved Son*, who paid the full price for his redemption: yes, he may hope in the very *justice* of God, who is "a just God and a Saviour,"

and can be "just, and yet the justifier of all them that believe." What an inscrutable mystery is here!

But we must notice also the good that accrues to man. Suppose man had never fallen, he would have had but a creature's righteousness, and consequently a reward only proportioned to it: but now the believer has the righteousness of the Creator himself, even the Lord Jesus Christ, who is "made righteousness unto us," and is therefore "called, The Lord our Righteousness." I may add too, that the believer is actually more safe than Adam was in Paradise. Adam had his own safety, and that of all his posterity, committed into his hands: and what the event was, we know by bitter experience. But God has now committed his chosen people to the hands of his own Son, that HE may redeem them by his blood, sanctify them by his Spirit, and "preserve them blameless unto his heavenly kingdom." Now Jesus himself tells us, that "of those who were given him, he lost none," nor ever would lose one; for that "none ever could, or ever should, pluck them out of his hands." The Father has no longer trusted us, so to speak, with our own destinies: he has treasured up our life and strength in Christ Jesus: "our life is hid with Christ in God:" and because Christ himself is our life, we, at his appearing, shall appear with him in glory."

Say, now, brethren, whether "these judgments be not indeed unsearchable, and these ways past finding out?"———]

Glorious as that part of our subject is, we leave it, in order to mark the mysteriousness of God's dealings with men,

II. In the way in which he imparts that salvation to them—

And here we would notice his conduct,

1. Towards the world at large—

[This is the point to which St. Paul in our text more especially refers: he has throughout the whole chapter expatiated upon the rejection of the Jews, the calling of the Gentiles, and the final restoration of the Jews themselves: and from the view of those mysterious dispensations he is led to make the exclamation before us. Consider then these points. Consider his first separating to himself a people in the person of Abraham, who was an idolater, like all the rest of the world. Yet he took not all of his seed; but only the seed of Isaac, excluding Ishmael from all participation of the promised blessings. Yet neither did he take all of Isaac's seed; but rejected Esau, the elder, and took Jacob, the younger; and *that* too by a special order, "whilst they were

yet in their mother's womb, and consequently could have done neither good nor evil." Is there nothing wonderful in this? Who could have conceived that God should vouchsafe such mercy to any; or that, vouchsafing it, he should dispense it in so sovereign a way? Yet so he did; and the fact is undeniable. In due time he multiplied the posterity of Jacob, and brought them out of Egypt, and led them through the wilderness, and put them into possession of the promised land, and communicated to that family *exclusively* the means of salvation for the space of two thousand years. Here we might ask, If God was not merciful, why did he choose any? and if he was merciful, why for so long a period did he exclude any? But "God's ways are in the great deep." "He giveth not account to us of any of his matters."

At last, for their iniquities he cast off his chosen people; and made the rejection of them *the occasion* and *the means* of calling in the Gentiles. Who shall explain this mystery? Who shall tell us the reasons why God acted thus? Who shall tell us why the Gentiles were not called before; or why they were called then; and especially why God made the fall of the Jews to be the riches of the Gentiles, and the salvation of the world? Will any one undertake to account for these things?

But the deepest part of this mystery yet remains to be noticed. God has still purposes of love towards his rejected people, though he has cast them off almost eighteen hundred years; and intends to make the more general awakening of the Gentiles the means of bringing back again to him the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and of engrafting them again upon their own stock, from which they have been so long broken off, and on which the Gentiles have been so long graffed in their stead: and then he will make that very restoration of the Jews the means of converting the whole world; so that it shall be as if there were a general resurrection of all the saints to live again upon the earth, all mankind being united under one head, the Lord Jesus Christ, and all constituting one fold under one Shepherd. What shall we say to these things? Was there not reason for Paul, in the prospect of them, to exclaim, "O the depths!" Truly "God's judgments are a great deep[a]:" "He doeth great things and unsearchable, and marvellous things without number[b]."]

2. Towards individual believers—

[In reference to these also we must say, that "God's ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts; but as high as the heavens are above the earth, so are his

[a] Ps. xxxvi. 6. [b] Job v. 9.

ways high above our ways and his thoughts above our thoughts." Observe *the objects of his choice:* Who are they? Are they such as human reason would select? He takes a Manasseh, who had filled Jerusalem with the blood of innocents; a Mary Magdalen, who had been possessed by seven devils; a Saul, that was a proud, blaspheming, cruel, blood-thirsty persecutor; and he leaves the young man, who, in his own opinion at least, had kept all God's commandments from his youth up: yes, publicans and harlots were admitted into his kingdom freely and in vast multitudes, whilst the Scribes and Pharisees were given over to final obduracy. What shall we say to this? The fact is unquestionable; and we can only say, as our Lord did in the contemplation of this great mystery, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

Mark farther *the manner in which he calls them to himself.* Some he calls with terror, as the jailor; and others with the gentle drawings of his love, as Nathanael: some by the instrumentality of his ministers; and others by the secret operations of his Spirit, without the intervention of any outward means: some suddenly, as Matthew; others gradually, as Apollos: some in early life, at the third or fourth hour; and others on a dying bed, at the eleventh hour.

His mode of completing in them the good work must also be noticed. Some he leads through deep waters, as David; whilst others have comparatively a smooth and easy passage: some, like Peter, are suffered to fall into grievous sins; whilst others, like Paul, persevere in an unblemished course even to the end.

In all these things the sovereignty of God is most conspicuously displayed: and St. Paul has a peculiar reference to that in the exclamation before us. He asks, "Who hath first given to the Lord?" Who has laid him under any obligation to confer his blessings upon him? If any such person can be found, let him come and prefer his claim; and I pledge myself, says he, that "it shall be recompensed unto him again." And then he goes on to declare, that God, as a mighty Sovereign, does every thing purely of his own will, and for his own glory: for that "of him, (as the Author,) and through him, (as the Disposer,) and to him, (as the End,) are all things: and that to him must all the glory be given for ever and ever[c]."

Such are God's judgments, and such his ways: but "how little a portion of him is known[d]!" This however we must say, that though "clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the basis of his throne."]

SEE then from hence,

[c] ver. 35, 36. [d] Job xxvi. 14.

1. What is the proper posture of a sinner's mind—

[We should not presume to sit in judgment upon God, arraigning either the declarations of his word, or the dispensations of his providence. What know we either of the one or of the other? "We were but of yesterday and know nothing:" and "if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know[e]." We are not to imagine, that, because there are many things in God's word above our ability to comprehend, they are therefore not true; or that, because in his providence there are many things which we cannot account for, they are therefore not good. We should remember, that the wisdom of man is foolishness with God: and that "though vain man would be wise, he is born like a wild ass's colt[f]." Let a sense of our extreme ignorance then lead us to a meek submission to our God; and let us, whenever difficulties occur, satisfy ourselves with this reflection, that, "what we know not now, we shall know hereafter."]

2. What is the truest felicity, both of saints and angels—

[To search into the great mystery of godliness is right, provided we do it with humility and godly fear. And, if we look to God to teach us, "he will by his Spirit shew us, what no unassisted eye ever saw, or ear heard, or heart conceived." Yes, He will teach us "the deep things of God:" he will exhibit to our view "the unsearchable riches of Christ," and give us an insight into that mystery of a crucified Saviour, "in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." What do we suppose were the feelings of the Apostle, when, from a view of the unsearchableness of God's judgments, he cried out "O the depths!" Can we conceive a sublimer joy than he at that time experienced? The angels are constantly employed just as he was at that time. We are expressly told, that they are "always desiring to look into" the great mysteries of redemption; and, no doubt, from every discovery they make, their joy is exceedingly enhanced. We cannot doubt but that the felicity of the saints in glory will very principally consist in this, in admiring and adoring those dispensations of grace and mercy, which here they so superficially beheld, but which then will be more fully unfolded to their view. Let this then, brethren, be your employment now: it will be a heaven upon earth: and the more enlarged are your discoveries of your Redeemer's glory here, the more will you be prepared and fitted for the enjoyment of it in a better world.]

[e] 1 Cor. viii. 2. [f] Job xi. 14.

MDCCCCIII.

GOD ALL IN ALL.

Rom. xi. 34—36. *Who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.*

GOD is represented in the Scriptures as "a jealous God." And well he may be so: for it is not fit that any portion of "his glory should be given to another." But man is ready, on all occasions, to arrogate something to himself. Hence it becomes the servants of God to exercise extreme vigilance in relation to this matter; and to claim for God the honour due unto his name.

In the chapter before us, the Apostle has been setting forth the mysterious designs of God in relation both to Jews and Gentiles. It had pleased God, for two thousand years, to confine the knowledge of himself to Abraham and his descendants: but at length he saw fit to cast off them, and to transfer his blessings to the Gentiles. In due season, however, it is his purpose to restore to his favour his ancient people, and, through their instrumentality, to diffuse the knowledge of himself over the face of the whole earth. Now, in the whole of this work, it is obvious that God has acted "according to the counsel of his own will;" and that to no creature in the universe is there left any room to boast. Hence St. Paul, in the words which we have read, ascribes all the glory to God alone.

Let me call your attention to the component parts of this sublime passage:

I. His unrestricted challenge—

Who will venture to claim any merit to himself in reference to redemption at large?—

[Of whom did God take counsel, when he determined to save a ruined world? Who suggested to him a hint respecting the substitution of his own Son in the place of sinful man? Who proposed to him so strange a way of reconciling all his

own glorious perfections, and of making all the rights of justice, and truth, and holiness, to consist with the exercise of mercy? — — — Or who ever did any thing to merit at his hands such an interposition in his favour? If there be any one so vain as to arrogate any thing to himself in this respect, let him bring forward his claim, and substantiate it before God, "that he may be recompensed" according to it. But we have no fear that this challenge will be accepted by any upon earth, or any one in heaven itself. The whole work of salvation is God's, and God's alone—the result of his wisdom, and the gift of his grace — — —]

Who will venture to claim any merit to himself, in reference to the application of this redemption to his own soul?—

[Who can ascribe any thing to *his own wisdom?* or who to *his own goodness?* Who will venture to reverse the saying of our Lord; and, in direct opposition to him, to assert, that "he first chose the Lord, and not the Lord him[a]?" What disposition or ability had any one of you to turn unto the Lord, till "He, of his own good pleasure, gave you both to will and to do[b]?" Or what had you done for him, that merited this favour at his hands? The salvation itself, and the faith by which you have embraced it, have been both, and equally, the gift of God[c]; and, whatever you may have attained, "by the grace of God you are what you are[d]."]

In connexion with this, let us consider,

II. His unqualified assertion—

Every good thing the Apostle refers to God, distinctly asserting him to be,

1. The Source of all—

[God is the one fountain of all good. The fallen angels could as easily have devised a way of salvation as we. We must, of necessity, go back to the period when God proposed to his Son to become our substitute and surety, and promised to him a seed, who should, if I may so speak, remunerate all the sufferings he should endure for us[e]: from that covenant must all our blessings be traced; and in accordance with it shall they all be vouchsafed — — —]

2. The Author of all—

[Not only did every thing spring from God, as the fruit of his sovereign love; but every thing was wrought in us by

[a] John xv. 16. [b] Phil. ii. 13. [c] Eph. ii. 8.
[d] 1 Cor. xv. 10. [e] Isai. liii. 10.

his power and grace. We could as easily form a new world, as we could form the new creature in our own bosoms: "He that must work us to this self-same thing, is God[f]." In its rise, its progress, and its consummation, no other hand can be seen but His. Nor is good alone to be traced to him; for he is, *so far as permission goes*, the author of evil also. *Moral* evil indeed cannot be ascribed to him, any further than as permitting it for wise and gracious ends: but *penal* evil, in whatever way it comes, and from whatever hand it proceeds, may be referred to him, as its proper author. The Sabeans and Chaldeans destroyed the property of Job; yet Job regarded them only as instruments in God's hands, and received the visitation precisely as if it had proceeded from God himself, without the intervention of any secondary cause[g]. Thus must we also do: for "there is not either good or evil in the city, but the Lord hath done it[h]."]

3. The End of all—

[God in every thing seeks his own glory, and from every thing will assuredly bring glory to himself. From the fall of man, from the very crucifixion of Christ himself, has his glory been educed: but never has he designed that man should glory[i]. Be it so, then, that you are enjoying salvation in all its fulness: you must, to the latest hour of your life, say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name, be the praise[k]"— — —]

A just view of the two former points will prepare us for,

III. His appropriate acknowledgment—

To God he gives the glory. And who amongst us will not cordially add his "Amen?"

We *must* do it upon earth—

[Our hearts should be duly sensible of our obligations to him, whether for temporal or spiritual blessings. To whom can we ascribe it, that we were brought into the world in a Christian land, where the light of revelation shines; and not in the midst of heathen darkness? To whom do we owe it, that we were made to hear the glad tidings of salvation, which are so faintly proclaimed even by the established messengers of Christ; and that we were enabled to receive them into our hearts, when so many pour contempt upon them, as of no value? Surely, "it is God who has made you to differ;" and to him must you ascribe all the praise.]

[f] 2 Cor. v. 5. [g] Job i. 21. [h] Amos iii. 6.
[i] 1 Cor. i. 29. [k] Ps. cxv. 1.

You *will* do it in heaven—

[Do you hear amongst the heavenly hosts one who is taking honour to himself? No: there is but one sound amongst all the celestial choir: all are singing praises to God and to the Lamb. And doubtless the saints in glory now see how much they are indebted to God "for events which once they deemed calamitous and adverse." Anticipate, then, that time; and now begin to acknowledge, in every thing, whether painful or pleasing, the wisdom, and goodness, and power, and faithfulness, of your God. And remember, that the more you have been enabled to do for God, the more you are indebted to God, by whose grace alone you have been empowered even to think a good thought[l].]

Now, from this subject you may surely LEARN,

1. Submission—

["The ways of God are a great deep," and "his paths past finding out." But when you reflect that neither men nor devils can exceed the commission they have received from him, surely you should say in all things, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good[m]" — — —]

2. Gratitude—

[View your mercies, which are more in number than the sands upon the sea-shore; and see if you can trace them to any source but God. And are they all the fruits of his love, and the effects of his power, and do they not call for gratitude at your hands? Methinks your every word should be thanksgiving, and your every breath be praise.]

3. Affiance—

[Doubtless there will be many circumstances that will be dark, and at present inexplicable: but you must never forget, that "though clouds and darkness be round about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne[n]." You have seen already, that, in numberless instances, he has brought good out of evil; and that you have had reason to bless him as much for things which have been contrary to your desires, as for things which have been gratifying to flesh and blood. Learn, then, to trust him for the future; and, under the darkest dispensations, learn to say with Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."]

[l] 1 Chron. xxix. 13, 14. [m] 1 Sam. iii. 18.
[n] Ps. xcvii. 2.

MDCCCCIV.

DEVOTEDNESS TO GOD RECOMMENDED.

Rom. xii. 1. *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

THE end of all true religion is, to bring men to God. From him they have fallen, and to him must they be restored. Whatever instructions have not this object in view, are of small value. The Gospel itself would be an empty speculation, if it did not teach us to hope for some practical effects. There are some who would separate principle from practice: but not so the Apostle Paul: he expected not fruit indeed without a root; nor hoped to raise an edifice, without laying a foundation: but, when his foundation was firmly laid, he deferred not to build upon it. In all the preceding part of this epistle he has shewn how sinners are to find acceptance with God; and has proved the sovereignty of God in the disposal of his blessings. But, having finished his argument, he does not leave us there; he goes on to shew the practical effects of his principles; and urges us, from the consideration of all God's mercies, to devote ourselves unreservedly to his service.

That we may enter fully into the exhortation before us, we shall consider,

I. The duty to which we are exhorted—

There is in the words before us an evident allusion to the sacrifices that were offered under the law. The victims were brought to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and were there slain; and their bodies were disposed of according to the particular directions given in the law, as suited to the occasions on which the offerings were made; some being wholly burnt upon the altar, and others partly burnt, and partly eaten by those who ministered before the Lord. In reference to these, we are required to "present our bodies (which is here put

for our whole selves) a living sacrifice unto the Lord;" that is, we should, with the full concurrence of our inmost souls, devote ourselves to God,

1. To fulfil his will—

[We must not strain a metaphor too far. The sacrifices under the law were intended to make atonement for sin: but this is no part of our office; Christ, our great sacrifice, having, by his own body once offered, made a full, perfect, and sufficient satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. It is only as far as the victim was surrendered entirely to God, that the metaphor is applicable to us: and in this view it is frequently used; the whole body of believers being themselves an offering to the Lord[a], and "a spiritual priesthood also, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ[b]."

Hear then to what an extent we are to be given up to God: May "the very God of peace," says the Apostle, "sanctify you wholly: and I pray God, your whole spirit, and soul, and body, may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ[c]." No part of us should be under the dominion of any other lord: but "as we have formerly yielded both the members of our bodies and the faculties of our souls, as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, we must henceforth yield them wholly unto God, as those that are alive unto God[d]." Every sin, of whatever kind, must be mortified; and every grace, however difficult and self-denying, be brought into habitual exercise — — —]

2. To be disposed of for his glory—

[If God call for our whole persons, as it were, to be consumed by fire upon his altar, we must not draw back; but must say with the Apostle, "I am ready, not only to be bound, but also to die, for the Lord's sake." So far from regarding such an event with dread, we should rather consider it as our highest honour. Thus it was that Paul viewed it: "If," says he, "I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all: do ye also joy and rejoice with me[e]:" for, so far am I from regarding such an event as a matter of condolence, that I look upon it as a fit subject for mutual congratulations. I mean not that such an end is to be sought for by us; but it is cheerfully to be submitted to, if God in his providence should call us to it. We should regard sufferings for Christ's sake with a holy indifference, "desiring only that Christ should be magnified in our bodies, whether by life or death[f]." Of course, all minor sacrifices of property,

[a] Rom. xv. 16. [b] 1 Pet. ii. 5. [c] 1 Thess. v. 23.
[d] Rom. vi. 12, 13, 19. [e] Phil. ii. 17, 18. [f] Phil. i. 20.

or reputation, or liberty, are to be welcomed by us, and gloried in, as means of honouring and glorifying our incarnate God[g]. In a word, "we should neither live unto ourselves, nor die unto ourselves; but live and die unto God only; so that, both living and dying, we may be the Lord's[h]."]

But let us mark more particularly the beauty and emphasis of,

II. The exhortation itself—

St. Paul presses upon us the performance of this duty,

1. From the obligations we owe to God—

[In all the preceding part of this epistle, St. Paul has been unfolding the great mystery of redemption as wrought out for us by the Lord Jesus Christ, and as applied to us by the Spirit, according to the eternal counsels of the Father. By the consideration of these "mercies" he urges us to give up ourselves to God. It was for this very end that these mercies were vouchsafed to us. Wherefore did our blessed Saviour "give himself for us?" Was it not "to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works?" And to what did the Father predestinate us, but to be conformed to the image of his Son?" Let these ends then be answered in us: and let us remember, that, "having been bought with a price, we are not our own but are bound to glorify God with our bodies and our spirits, which are his[i]."]

2. From the nature of the service itself—

[It is *good in itself.*—"God calls us not unto uncleanness, but to holiness." He says, "Be ye holy; for I am holy." The sacrifices under the law were to be without spot or blemish: and such also are we to be: "We should present ourselves a living sacrifice, *holy.*" True it is, that till we are renewed by the Holy Spirit we cannot be holy: but it is equally true, that, when we come to the Lord Jesus Christ aright, he will give us his Holy Spirit, by whom we shall be "created after God in righteousness and true holiness," and "be changed into Christ's image, from glory to glory."

It is also "*acceptable to God.*"—Nothing in the universe is so pleasing to him as a broken and contrite heart. As for all the legal sacrifices, he had no delight in them, any farther than they typified the Lord Jesus, and were offered with a reference to him. They were even odious to him,

[g] 1 Pet. iv. 12—14. [h] Rom. xiv. 7, 8. [i] 1 Cor. vi. 20.

when presented by ungodly worshippers, who relied on them for acceptance, whilst they lived in wilful sin[k]. A heart filled with gratitude to him, and devoted to his service, was "more than thousands of rams or ten thousands of rivers of oil[l]: and every act of obedience proceeding from faith and love, is in his sight the most acceptable tribute that can possibly be offered[m]."

It is also *most worthy of a rational being.* Any service short of an entire surrender of the soul to God is irrational and absurd. How can it possibly be, that the heart-searching God should approve of formal and hypocritical services! If he had no delight in the blood of bulls and of goats, how can we suppose that he should have pleasure in lying words, and hypocritical professions? But in the surrender of the soul to him, there is something that commends itself to the judgment of every considerate mind. True, we cannot add to his glory or happiness by any thing that we can do: but still we may employ for him the bodies he has created, and the souls he has redeemed: and in so doing, we render him the best service of which our nature is capable; and shall asuredly receive from him at last that token of his approbation, "Well done, good and faithful servant."]

APPLICATION—

[Let me now, brethren, after the Apostle's example, address you in *the language of entreaty.* We might, as standing in the place of Almighty God, command you: but for love sake we rather "beseech you." O consider what mercies you have received at God's hand, and are yet hoping to receive, through the sacrifice of his only dear Son ———Think too how reasonable is the service to which we call you; how profitable to you, and how pleasing to God ——— We entreat you not to withhold it: we entreat you not to defer it another hour. If indeed you can prove it unreasonable, or unprofitable, or unacceptable to God, we are content that you shall reject it as folly, and decry it as enthusiasm: but if you cannot find one substantial objection against it, or one reasonable excuse for declining it, then, we beseech you, act as becomes persons already on the brink and precipice of eternity, and speedily to stand at the judgment-seat of Christ. Give yourselves up to Him who bought you with his blood: give yourselves to him, to be saved in his appointed way, and to glorify him in every situation which you may be called to fill. If he calls you to act for him, "whatsoever your hand findeth to do, do it with all your might:" and if to suffer for

[k] Isai. i. 11—14. [l] Mic. vi. 6—8.
[m] Ps. l. 9—14. Heb. xiii. 15, 16.

him, "rejoice that you are counted worthy to suffer for his sake." Thus shall the end of all God's mercies to you be duly answered, and his glory be advanced in your everlasting salvation.]

MDCCCCV.

AGAINST CONFORMITY TO THE WORLD.

Rom. xii. 2. *Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

THE morality, no less than the doctrines, of the Gospel far excels the boasted inventions of philosophy. There is not one principle in the human heart, or one action of our lives, which is not depraved by sin. The whole system of man's conduct is deranged: and to rectify it in all its parts, is the scope of that revelation which God has given us. The inspired writers are not satisfied with lopping off a few branches; they strike at the root of all sin; and labour to bring us back to that state of allegiance to our Maker from which we are fallen. This is peculiarly observable in the exhortation before us, in explaining which we shall shew,

I. What is that conformity to the world which we are to avoid—

Doubtless there is a degree of conformity to the world which is necessary, if we would not render ourselves perfectly ridiculous and absurd: but there are limits, beyond which we ought not to go. To mark out those limits we may observe, that we should not be conformed to,

1. Its company and conduct—

[We cannot *wholly* avoid worldly company; for "then we must needs go out of the world:" but we surely should not choose such for our companions; and much less form an indissoluble alliance with them[a]. If we ourselves be spiritual, it is not possible that we should enjoy the society of a carnal person, because his views, desires, and pursuits must of

[a] 1 Cor. vii. 39. "*only in the Lord.*"

necessity be as opposite to ours as darkness is to light[b]. By forming a connexion with such persons, what can be expected but that we should be enticed to imitate their conduct? And though we commit no flagrant evil, we are assured, that while we are walking according to the course of this world, we walk after the will of Satan and not of God[c].]

2. Its maxims and principles—

[According to the established maxims of the world, we should seek above all things the favour and esteem of men; we should avoid every thing that may make us appear singular; and on no account testify our disapprobation of any practice that is sanctioned by general custom. But how do such principles accord with the Holy Scriptures? In them we are told that, if we make it our grand aim to please men, we cannot be the servants of Jesus Christ[d]: and, if we have attained that object, instead of congratulating ourselves upon our success, we have reason to tremble on account of the woe denounced against us[e]. Instead of dreading a necessary singularity, we are required to shine as lights in a dark world[f], and not only to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but faithfully to reprove them[g]. We are to be armed with a steady determination to live the rest of our time, not to the lusts of men, but to the will of God[h].]

3. Its spirit and temper—

[In what does the spirit of the world consist? It consists altogether in self-seeking, self-pleasing, self-confidence, and self-complacency. Now can any thing be more abhorrent from a Christian state than such a disposition as this? We are not to be resting satisfied with present attainments, or studying how much we can please the flesh without forfeiting the favour of God; but are rather to be pressing forwards towards perfection, without at all regarding the loss or pain we may be called to undergo in the prosecution of our duty[i]. How hateful a want of such a holy resolution is, may be seen in the reply which our Lord made to Peter, who would have dissuaded him from exposing himself to the trials he had predicted: "Get thee behind me Satan; for thou *savourest not the things that be* of God, but those that be *of men*[k]."]

Further light will be reflected on this subject by considering,

[b] 2 Cor. vi. 14—17. [c] Eph. ii. 2. [d] Gal. i. 10.
[e] Luke vi. 26. [f] Phil. ii. 15. [g] Eph. v. 11.
[h] 1 Pet. iv. 2. [i] Acts xx. 24. and xxi. 13.
[k] Matt. xvi. 23.

II. Wherein consists that transformation of soul that is opposed to it—

The Christian is "a new creature; old things are passed away; and all things are become new:" according to the proficiency he has made, he conforms himself to,

1. Other principles—

[The worldly man knows no higher principle than self-love: whatever be his subordinate motive of action, all may be traced up to this. But they who are partakers of the Gospel salvation, are under the influence of a far nobler principle, the love of Christ: the thought of Christ having died for them, fills their hearts with admiration and gratitude: it inspires them with an ardent desire to testify their sense of his kindness: and forms a powerful incentive to holy actions. This is attested by St. Paul[1]; and it constitutes a most essential part of that transformation of soul, which characterizes the true Christian. Subordinate motives indeed a believer may feel; but a desire of pleasing and honouring God, and a fear of dishonouring or displeasing him, will operate with the greatest force; and *that* too, in opposition to carnal considerations, no less than in aid of them.]

2. Other rules—

[The fashion of the world is the standard by which men in general regulate their conduct: but the Christian takes the word of God for his guide, and the example of Christ for his pattern; and, instead of reducing the rule to his practice, he endeavours to elevate his practice to the rule. He brings every thing "to the law and to the testimony:" and a plain declaration, or command, of God will be more to him than any precepts of men, or than the example of the whole universe. It is his ambition to "walk as Christ walked:" and though he knows that he can never attain *the measure* of his perfection, yet he strives incessantly to follow *the pattern* of it, that so he may be perfect even as his Father that is in heaven is perfect[m].]

3. Other ends—

[A Christian would not be content with ordering his actions aright, even if he could arrive at the highest degrees of holiness, unless he had also the testimony of his conscience that he sought, not his own glory, but the glory of God: having been "bought with a price," he is conscious that he is "not

[1] 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. [m] Matt. v. 48.

his own," and that consequently he "ought not to live unto himself, but unto him that died for him." He feels that, if in any thing he consult merely his own honour or interest, he so far withholds from God the honour due unto his name; and therefore he labours to comply with that divine injunction, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God[n]."]

Thus is the Christian transformed, not in respect of his life only, but in the spirit of his mind; and therefore can declare from experience,

III. What effects this progressive renovation will produce—

There are many objections raised by the world against the sanctity that has been before described; and there is much opposition to it in the heart of every unrenewed person: but the experience of it will most effectually discover it to be,

1. Good in itself—

[Piety is too generally considered as needless preciseness: nor need we have any thing more than a separation from the world, and a transformation of soul after the Divine image, in order to become objects of reproach and contempt. Even the more sober and discreet part of mankind regard the precepts before us as "hard sayings," unsuitable to modern times, and unfit for general practice. But as our Lord said of his doctrines, that whosoever would do his will, should know whether they were of God[o], so we may say of his precepts. While we are blinded by carnal desires, the commands of God will appear rigorous; and we shall labour more to explain them away, than to obey them: but if once we adopt them as the rule of our conduct, their beauty and excellence will manifestly appear; and we shall be convinced that, to obey them is, to be truly happy[p].]

2. Acceptaole to God—

[While religion is accounted superstition, it is no wonder that the sublimer duties of Christianity are declined as unnecessary, and that they who practise them are deemed "righteous over-much." But a renovation of soul will soon dispel this error, and shew us that, the more entire our devotedness to God be, the more highly shall we be raised in God's esteem. If only we make the word of God the standard of our actions, we cannot possibly be too earnest in improving the

[n] 1 Cor. x. 31. [o] John vii. 17. [p] Isai. xxxii. 17.

talents committed to us: nor can we doubt but that the tokens of God's approbation that we shall receive, shall be proportioned to the sacrifices we have made, and the exertions we have used in his service[q].]

3. Beneficial to man—

[It is usually supposed that a compliance with the directions in the text would weaken our faculties, and so distract our minds as to render us unfit for the common offices of life. But the very reverse of this is known to be true by all those who make the experiment. Heavenly-mindedness tends to "perfect" the man of God in all his faculties, and "thoroughly to furnish him unto all good works." Till this takes possession of the soul, a man is the sport of every temptation, and liable to be led captive by every lust: but grace will establish his heart; it will bring a consistency into his whole conduct; it will change him into the very image of God; and will render him "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."]

ADDRESS—

1. Those who are yet conformed to the world—

[If you are free from gross vices, you do not apprehend your conformity to the world to be any reason for questioning the safety of your state. But it is scarcely possible for God to declare in more express terms your guilt and danger, than he has done in various parts of Holy Writ[r]. You are therefore reduced to this alternative, either to come out of Sodom, or to perish in it; either to enter in at the strait gate, and walk in the narrow way, or to fall into that destruction that awaits you at the end of the broad and frequented path. O that God may enable you to choose the good part; and to adhere to it in spite of all the odium your singularity may bring upon you!]

2. Those who profess to have experienced a transformation of soul—

[You need to be much upon your guard lest "after you have escaped the pollutions of the world, you should be again entangled therein and overcome[s]." It is your wisdom to avoid temptation, and to guard against the snares that are laid for your feet. However circumspectly you may walk, you will find reason enough to lament your manifold defects. Lay not then any stumbling-blocks in your own way; but seek rather to experience the transforming efficacy of the Gospel: let the world be crucified unto you, and be ye crucified unto

[q] Matt. xxv. 20—23.
[r] John xvii. 16. Gal. i. 4. 2 John ii. 15, 16. Jam. iv. 4.
[s] 2 Pet. ii. 20.

the world[t]. As obedient children, "fashion yourselves in no respect according to your former lusts in your ignorance, but as he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation[u]."]

[t] Gal. vi. 14. [u] 1 Pet. i. 14, 15.

MDCCCCVI.

SOBRIETY OF MIND ENJOINED.

Rom. xii. 3. *For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.*

IN order to obtain just views of any passage of Scripture, we must pay the strictest attention to the context. It is by the context that the precise import of the words before us must be determined. It sometimes happens, however, that the misconstruction of a single word—by which I mean, the taking of a word in its more common acceptation, when it is used by the inspired writer in a more peculiar sense—will involve the whole passage in the greatest obscurity. The word translated "for" is generally used to introduce a reason for something immediately preceding: but in my text, as in many other parts of the Apostle's writings, I apprehend it means "moreover;" for the Apostle is passing on to a subject unconnected with that which he had spoken of in the preceding words, except merely as he descends from a general exhortation to the mention of some particulars. Having recommended, in the two preceding verses, the cultivation of general piety, as the proper improvement to be made of all the doctrines which he had before established, he descends to some particulars, which, in the state of the Roman Church at that time, he deemed of peculiar importance. There were at Rome, as well as at Corinth, many who were possessed of miraculous gifts: and some were ready to value themselves too highly on account of those gifts; forgetting that they had received them from God, and

that, not for their own aggrandizement, but for the benefit of the Church to which they belonged. It should seem that these gifts were put forth by a special exercise of faith; and that persons were enabled to exercise them at those seasons, and in those degrees to which they were prompted by a special communication of faith to their souls[a]. The meaning therefore of our text is, 'Pride not yourselves on any gifts which you possess; but thankfully acknowledge God as the author of them, and improve them humbly for his glory.' In this view, the words before us are precisely similar to that more enlarged statement which the Apostle gives in his First Epistle to the Corinthians[b]; and the word 'faith,' in our text, is equivalent to that expression in the Epistle to the Ephesians: "To every one of us is grace given, *according to the measure of the gift of Christ*[c]."

But, as miraculous gifts have long since ceased, and as the caution in my text is equally applicable to gifts of every kind, I shall take this more enlarged view of the words, and consider,

I. The caution here given—

It is well known that gifts, of whatever kind they be, are too commonly made an occasion of pride—

[It is difficult for any one to possess any particular quality, whether of mind or body, and not feel a measure of self-admiration and self-preference on account of it. How great a snare to a person's own mind superior beauty is, is well known: and so is every other bodily endowment, in proportion as it is admired by the world at large. Talent, too, will puff up the possessor of it with a conceit of his importance, and cause him to arrogate to himself a more than ordinary homage from those around him. And glad should we be if the same kind of conceit were never founded on attainments of a moral or religious nature: but it is a fact, that morality itself is made, by almost all who possess it, a ground for self-preference, and *that*, too, even before God himself; insomuch, that persons who have been preserved from great and flagrant transgressions, treat almost with contempt the provisions of the Gospel, from a conceit, that they need not to humble

[a] Compare 1 Cor. xiii. 2. Jam. v. 15. Matt. xvii. 20.
[b] ver. 6. with 1 Cor. xii. 4—11. [c] Eph. iv. 7.

themselves like a poor publican, but that they may justly expect from God some peculiar favour on account of their own inherent righteousness. This was the habit of the Apostle's mind, previous to his conversion; and it is that which is at this day the greatest obstacle to the conversion of thousands. Even spiritual gifts, too, are often, through the suggestions of our great adversary, made occasions of self-preference and self-complacency; when every sentiment which the Gospel contains has a direct tendency to humble us in the dust.]

But modesty and sobriety should, under all circumstances, regulate our self-esteem—

[We are all members of one body: and, whatever gifts we possess, they are bestowed by God for the good of the whole. The kind and measure of them are determined by the Donor himself; and the person possessing them has no more right to pride himself upon them, than the eye or ear has to arrogate to itself any merit above the hand or foot. All that any man has to do, is, to improve his talents for the good of the whole, precisely as the various members of our body do. The eye sees not for itself; nor does the ear hear for itself; nor does the hand or foot consult its own exclusive welfare in its motions and acts. So we, "having gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us," must employ them all for the ends for which they have been bestowed. Whether our gift be of a higher or lower order, we are not to concern ourselves about that, either in a way of self-elevation or of self-depression; but we must diligently, according to our ability, improve it, to the glory of God, and the edification of his Church and people.]

To every one of you, therefore, I address the caution in our text—

[There is no one who does not need it: there is no one who has not occasion for it: there is no one who has not, in his own conceit at least, something whereof to glory, and something which gives him an ideal superiority over others of his own rank, and age, and circumstances. But, in all, pride is alike hateful, and alike unreasonable: for, granting that we do differ from others, "what have we that we have not received? And, if we have received it, how absurd is it to glory as if we had not received it[d]!"]

But that this caution may be laid to heart, I will proceed to point out,

II. The importance of it—

[d] 1 Cor. iv. 7.

This is marked with very peculiar force in the passage before us. In the preceding verses, where the Apostle had exhorted the Roman converts to piety in a general view, he had addressed them as "*Brethren*," and used the language of *entreaty;* but in the text, where he particularizes the duty of humility, he assumes *the authority of an Apostle*, and in a most solemn way lays the *strictest injunctions* upon every individual amongst them[e]. And the very terms he uses are so strong, so MARKED, so peculiar, as scarcely to be capable of being translated into any other language, and such as were admirably calculated to make the deepest impression on their minds[f].

Attend, then, carefully to this injunction,

1. For your own honour—

[Nothing renders a man more contemptible than vanity: it invariably defeats its own ends, and sinks us in the estimation of all whose applause we covet. But, independent of that, the more we arrogate to ourselves, the less will people be disposed to concede to us: and, if they cannot refuse us some degree of credit on those points wherein we excel, they will be sure to search out some faults to put into the balance against it; so that, on the whole, we shall be gainers to as small an amount as possible. On the other hand, modesty gives effect to all our other excellencies: and the more meekly we bear our honours, the more liberal will even the most envious of our rivals be in the bestowment of them. To "prefer others in honour before ourselves[g]," is the way to disarm their hostility, to allay their jealousies, to conciliate their regard: so that, even if we had no better object in view than the advancement of ourselves in the estimation of man, we should seek it, not by self-conceit and self-preference, but by sobriety in self-estimation, and by modesty in our whole deportment. To this effect, the wisest of men has taught us, "To seek our own glory, is not glory[h]:" on the contrary, "when pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom[i]."]

2. For the honour of God—

[e] When he says, "Through the grace that is given unto me," he refers to his apostolic office: Rom. i. 5.

[f] Mark the repetition of the word *φρονεῖν*. *μὴ ὑπερφρονεῖν παρ' ὃ δεῖ φρονεῖν· ἀλλὰ φρονεῖν εἰς τὸ σωφρονεῖν.*

[g] ver. 10. and Phil. ii. 3.

[h] Prov. xxv. 27.

[i] Prov. xi. 2.

[It is an insult to God to make his gifts a pedestal for the exaltation of *self*. You will remember, that he complains of his people of old, because they appropriated *his* corn, and *his* wine, and *his* oil," to the honouring of others who were his rivals in their esteem[k]. And this is the very thing which every man does, who takes to himself the honour of those gifts which have been conferred upon him by God. And how indignant Jehovah is at such treatment, we may see in his expostulations with Sennacherib: "I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of *his* high looks. For he saith, By the strength of *my* hands *I* have done it, and by *my* wisdom; for *I* am prudent; and *I* have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures; and *I* have put down their inhabitants, like a valiant man: and *my* hand hath found, as a nest, the riches of the people; and, as one gathereth eggs that are left, have *I* gathered all the earth: and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped." Now, hear Jehovah's reply to this soliloquy: "Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood[l]." Tell me, I pray you, what would you have been above the beasts, if God had not endowed you with reason? or, what had you differed from the meanest of the human race, if God had not made you to differ? Your distinctive powers afford you ground enough for gratitude; but none for self-applause: and if, like Herod, you take to yourselves the credit which your ignorant or partial friends may accord to you, like Herod you shall become monuments of God's just and fiery indignation. You may not be eaten up with worms in this life: but you shall surely bear his displeasure in the world to come. "God is a jealous God:" and "his glory will he not give to another[m]." "From him does every good and perfect gift proceed[n];" and to him must all the glory of it be ascribed: "He that glorieth, must glory only in the Lord[o]."]

3. For the benefit of your own souls—

["Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him[p]." To what purpose will you possess gifts, if they prove only a curse unto you? But such they really are, to all who pride themselves in them: for "God scorneth the scorners; but giveth grace unto the lowly[q]." If

[k] Hos. ii. 5, 8, 9.
[l] Isai. x. 12—15.
[m] Exod. xx. 5. Isai. xlii. 8.
[n] Jam. i. 17.
[o] Jer. ix. 23. and 1 Cor. iv. 7.
[p] Prov. xxvi. 12.
[q] Prov. iii. 34. with 1 Pet. v. 5.

your talents be improved for God, they will bring from him a recompence proportioned to the increase[r]. Thus, both here and in the eternal world, will you be gainers, if with meekness and modesty you employ for God the blessings he has imparted to you. To every one, then, that is among you, I say,]

1. Consider your gifts as conferred on you by God—

[Never, for a moment, lose sight of this truth. Let Him be acknowledged, in every bounty of his providence, and in every blessing of his grace. There is no need that you should be blind to what God has done for you, or wrought in you: but, if at any time you are constrained to say, "I laboured more abundantly than they all," be sure to add immediately, "Yet not I; but the grace of God that was with me[s]."]

2. Improve them diligently, for the glory of his name—

[Forget yourselves altogether. Moses saw not his own glory, when it shone; though it was so resplendent, that none of his brethren could sustain the sight. O that you also might be so intent on the work assigned you, as to have your attention wholly taken from yourselves! Consider only what talent you possess, and what improvement can be made of it: and if you find that God has given you a capacity for great and arduous services, be willing to undertake them, whatever difficulties they may be attended with, and whatever self-denial may be required for the performance of them. On the contrary, if you have but one talent, "wrap it not in a napkin," but improve it for your God. Let it be said of every one amongst you, "He hath done what he could[t]." Then, whether your powers be great or small, you shall be approved of your God, and hear him at last say unto you, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."]

[r] Matt. xxv. 20, 21. [s] 1 Cor. xv. 10. [t] Mark xiv. 8.

MDCCCCVII.

CHRISTIANS ARE ALL MEMBERS OF ONE BODY.

Rom. xii. 4—8. *As we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that*

teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

TO have the mind well instructed in religious principles is good: but we must never forget that the end of principle is practice; and that all the knowledge, whether of men or angels, will be of no service, if it do not operate to the renovation of our souls after the Divine image. Hence St. Paul, having established with irresistible force all the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, proceeds to urge upon the Church at Rome a practical improvement of them. The first improvement of them is, to surrender up ourselves unfeignedly and unreservedly to God in a way of devout affection. The next is, to employ ourselves diligently for him in every office whereby we can benefit his Church and people. To the former of these the Apostle calls us in the first verse of this chapter: and to the latter, in the words which we have just read. But to this latter we are yet further called by the relation which we bear to the Church of God, whereof we are members: and in this view it is inculcated by the Apostle in our text.

Let us then consider,

I. The relation which we bear to one another—

As descendants of Adam, we are all members of one family, of which God is the universal Parent: but, as the redeemed of the Lord, we are brought into the nearest union with Christ, so as to be members of his body, and consequently to be "members also one of another." To elucidate more fully this important truth, we will distinctly notice,

1. Our general connexion—

[All true Christians are parts of one great whole, even as the different members of our corporeal body are. All have their appropriate sphere of action, and ought to fulfil the peculiar duties for which they are fitted. Those who have a higher office in this mystical body have no ground for pride, seeing that "they have nothing which they have not received:" their place in the body, and their faculties, having been foreordained and given by Him "who divideth to every man

severally as he will[a]." On the other hand, they who have the lowest office have no reason for discontent: for they, in their place, are as necessary to the perfection of the whole, as any other member whatever. If they have a lower office than others, they have comparatively less responsibility: and, if they discharge their office conscientiously for the good of the whole and the glory of God, their improvement of their one talent will as certainly be acknowledged and rewarded by God, as the improvement which others may make of their ten talents.]

2. Our mutual dependence—

[No man is independent: no man is sufficient for his own welfare: no man can say to any other, I have no need of you[b]. Every one is in want of many things that must be supplied by others: the eye needs the foot, as much as the foot needs the eye. No member possesses any thing for itself alone: the eye sees not for itself, nor does the ear hear for itself: it is for the whole that every member's faculties are given; and for the whole must they be employed. If any member be afflicted, all the rest must sympathize with it, and administer to it: and if any member be particularly benefited, all the others must be partakers of its joy. Every one must consider the concerns of others as its own[c]: nor must any one draw back from the most self-denying offices for the good of others. Is a hand bruised? the feet, the eye, the tongue, the ear, must all exert their respective talents to procure relief. No one must refuse to do what in him lies for the good of the others. The same members that now put forth their powers for the relief of one that is afflicted, may soon need from it a return of the same kind offices: and if any should say, I will give myself no trouble about this afflicted member, he will soon be made to see, that, by producing a schism in the body, he does the greatest injury to himself; it being impossible either to impart, or to withhold, the required assistance, without participating in the effects of its own conduct.]

3. Our individual interest—

[The interest of every individual member is, to get its own powers invigorated and enlarged. The more penetrating the eye, or the more expert the hand, the more it will be able to advance the good of the whole. Now every member of the Church being united unto Christ as his living Head, he should seek from Christ such gracious communications as may fit him more for the discharge of every office to which he is called.

[a] 1 Cor. xii. 4—11. [b] 1 Cor. xii. 14—23.
[c] 1 Cor. xii. 25, 26. with Phil. ii. 4.

Whatever situation the member may hold in the body, its duty, and its interest also, is the same. It will not be advanced by intruding into the offices of another, but by fulfilling its own, and getting a greater measure of activity and vigour in the discharge of them. In truth, each is advanced only in proportion as it contributes to the welfare of others. The feet, whilst keeping the whole body in health, enjoy health themselves: the hands, whilst they procure sustenance for the whole body, are themselves strengthened: and in seeking the good of the whole, each advances most the glory of that blessed Saviour, whose members they are[d]. The Saviour's glory and the welfare of the Church are so identified, that they cannot be separated from each other[e].

Thus we see the truth and propriety of the comparison in our text: for as all the members of our body are united to the head, and to each other by the head; as they also receive life and nourishment from the head, and act in subserviency to it and by its direction; and finally, as they all have precisely the same interests, and have a perfect communion with each other in all that relates to their welfare; so it is with the Church of God: all are united to Christ by faith: all, by virtue of their union with him, are united to each other in him: all have their separate endowments for the good of the whole: all should look upon each other as members of their own body, as much as his hands or feet are: and all should feel with, and act for, every other member, precisely as for himself. O that this our relation to Christ and to each other were felt and realized among the saints of every communion under heaven!]

But our view of this relation will answer no good end, unless we attend to,

II. The duties arising from it—

The offices mentioned in our text, were, if not wholly, yet in a measure distinct, in the apostolic age. There were two great leading offices; the "prophesying," or preaching of the word of God[f]; and "ministering" to the temporal necessities of the Church, as the deacons did[g]. Under these two classes all the remainder may be arranged. Connected with those who prophesied were those also who "taught"

[d] 1 Cor. x. 24. [e] 1 Cor. x. 27. with Eph. iv. 15, 16.

[f] So the word frequently means; and does not *necessarily* include miraculous gifts. 1 Thess. v. 20.

[g] The Greek word shews this.

and "exhorted:" and connected with the deacons' office were those who "ruled," or superintended the temporal concerns of the Church, "giving," and dispensing its alms, and "shewing mercy" to those whose afflictions called for more than ordinary tenderness and compassion. But it is obvious that these various offices, even admitting that some of them were in the first instance associated with miraculous powers, are, in substance, of perpetual use and authority in the Church of Christ: there must still be persons to administer both spiritual instruction and temporal relief; and in many instances, the offices are most advantageously united. Without entering into any minute distinctions of this kind, we will content ourselves with saying in general, that, whatever station any of us hold in the Church of Christ, or whatever office we be called to execute, we should execute it,

1. With care and diligence—

[Certainly "prophesying," or preaching the word of God, ought to be prosecuted with all imaginable care and diligence. We should, as "stewards of the mysteries of God," administer to every one his portion in due season. We should "give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine," "that so we may save both ourselves and them that hear us." We should "take heed to our ministry that we fulfil it." In like manner, if we perform any other office, visiting the sick, instructing the ignorant, relieving the necessitous, we should bestow much attention on the work, to execute it most for the benefit of the Church and the glory of God. It requires no small care to act so as most to counteract the effect of prejudice, and to render our efforts most beneficial to those for whom they are used. We must take care "not to let our good be evil spoken of," and not to defeat by imprudence what, by a due attention to times and circumstances, might have been advantageously accomplished[h].]

2. With patience and perseverance—

[We must expect to meet with difficulties in every service which we are called to perform. But we must not be discouraged by them. We must go forward, like St. Paul, "not moved by any trials," "nor counting our lives dear to us," if we be called to sacrifice them in the way of duty. Whatever

[h] Matt. vii. 6.

we may meet with, we must "not faint or be weary in well doing," but, "by patient continuance in it," approve ourselves faithful unto death. Sometimes the difficulties will arise from one quarter, and sometimes from another: sometimes they will assume the garb of humility, and make us pretend unfitness for the work we have undertaken. But we must guard against this delusion: it may be true enough, that we are unfit; but that unfitness may proceed from our own sloth and want of spirituality; in which case it is not an excuse for us, but an aggravation of our guilt. We should rise to the occasion: "If the axe be blunt, we should put to the more strength[i]:" and if we feel ourselves beginning to faint, we must entreat of God to "strengthen us with might in our inward man," and to "give us always all-sufficiency in all things." We do not mean by this to encourage any to undertake offices for which they are altogether unfit; but to guard you against "putting your hand to the plough, and looking back again:" for "if any man draw back, my soul, says God, shall have no pleasure in him." Possibly a want of success may be pleaded by us as an excuse: but that is no excuse. If, like Hosea, we were to labour for seventy years with little apparent benefit, it would be no reason for abandoning the Lord's work. "To plant and water," is our part; "to give the increase," is God's: and whether we have any success or not, our duty is the same, both to Christ our Head, and to all the members of his body. It should be sufficient for us to know, that we have laboured to do the will of God. If we see the fruit of our labours, well; we have reason to be thankful for it: but, if not, then we must be satisfied with the assurance, that, "though Israel be not gathered, yet shall God be glorious," yea, and our reward also shall be equally great: for "every man shall receive," not according to his success, but "according to his own labour[k]."]

3. With love and cheerfulness—

[We must do "nothing grudgingly or of necessity; for God loveth in all things a cheerful giver." It may be that the conduct of those whose benefit we seek, may be less amiable than might be wished. In every department, whether the more public one of preachers, or the more private one of visiting the sick, we may find much perverseness and ingratitude. But our delight must be in our work: we must enter upon it readily, and perform it cheerfully; and heap coals of fire on the heads of those who render evil for good. By kindness we may remove prejudice and conciliate regard: and by a want of it we may defeat our own most benevolent purposes. Study then a suavity of manner: if called to "speak the truth," speak it

[i] Eccl. x. 10. [k] 1 Cor. iii. 8.

" in love;" and, as the Apostle says, " Let all your things be done with charity."

If it be said, that to practise this is difficult; true, it is so; yea, and impossible to those who know not their relation to Christ, and to one another: but to those who look to Christ as their living Head, and who receive out of his fulness, nothing is impossible: " Through Christ strengthening us we can do all things." Nor, if we regard our brother as a member of our own body, shall we find this so difficult: for who ever was backward to assuage his own pains, or relieve his own necessities? If, moreover, we consider the Lord Jesus Christ himself as relieved in the relief conferred on his distressed members, shall we then need any stimulus to exertion? No: it will be our joy to perform towards him every office of love. Thus think ye then, and thus act; and know, that " not even a cup of cold water shall lose its reward."]

MDCCCCVIII.

CHRISTIAN DUTIES TO GOD AND MAN EXPLAINED.

Rom. xii. 9—12. *Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.*

THAT men, who wallow in all manner of uncleanness, should not like to hear the precepts of religion, is easy to be accounted for: but that persons professing godliness should be averse to them, is surprising. Yet it is a fact, that many, whose lives, as far as we can see, are moral, pour contempt upon moral instructions, as having no part in evangelical religion. But these persons are directly at issue with that Apostle, whom they most exalt, and whom, in other respects, they affect to follow. Who is more diffuse, who more minute, than the Apostle Paul, in the instructions which he gives respecting Christian duties? Let us attend to those which are here inculcated. If we took them singly, every one of them would furnish matter for a separate discourse: but, as the Apostle has united them so closely together, we prefer taking them in their accumulated state;

because, if by means of it we lose somewhat in point of distinctness, that loss will be more than supplied by the light which they will mutually reflect on each other, and the force that will be derived from a combination of them all.

The Apostle here states the Christian's duties,

I. In general—

[We must "abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good." The strength of these expressions deserves particular attention. Had we been told to avoid what was evil, and to practise what was good, it would have been sufficient for the regulation of our outward conduct. But religion is to engage the heart; and is to rectify, not merely our acts, but our habits, our dispositions, our *taste*[a]. Sin must be hateful to us: and not gross sin only, but all sin without exception. It is not merely to be formidable to us on account of its penal consequences, but hateful on account of its odious qualities. As "God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," so are we to be of purer hearts than to regard it with any other feeling than that of utter "abhorrence." God calls it "that abominable thing which his soul hateth:" and in precisely the same light should we view it. The circumstance of its being common, or fashionable, or profitable, or pleasant, should make no difference in our feelings towards it; nor should we be at all more reconciled to it, because the world choose to call it venial. Every deviation from God's holy law, every opposition to his revealed will, we should consider as debasing, defiling, damning; and every temptation to depart so much as an hair's breadth from the perfect line of rectitude, we should resist even unto blood: "We should resist unto blood, striving against sin[b]."

In like manner, and to a like extent, we must "cleave unto that which is good," or, as the word imports, be *glued* unto it[c]. The effect of glue is to unite things together with such a degree of tenacity, that they cannot afterwards be separated. Now in this way should our souls, when once brought into contact with good, adhere to it, and form with it an indissoluble union. Whether it be good principles or good practice that we are called to embrace, we must never afterwards let them go: "We must buy the truth and sell it not." Whatever force be used to separate us from the thing which is really good, we must be firm and unmoved. If, like the Hebrew Youths, we be menaced with a fiery furnace, we must be steadfast to our

[a] Rom. viii. 5. *φρονοῦσιν.* [b] Heb. xii. 4.
[c] *κολλώμενοι, aggluminati.* Beza.

purpose, "not counting our lives dear to us, so that we may but fulfil the will of God, and finish our course with joy[d]." To every one who would draw us from the path of duty, we must make this reply, "Whether it be right to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye: for we cannot but do what we know to be his will[e]."]

The Apostle, having thus briefly declared our duty in general terms, proceeds to speak of it,

II. In a more specific manner—

Of those which he particularizes we shall be called to notice three; namely, the duties,

1. Of kindness—

[Here again the language is such as God alone could inspire. Such a sentiment as is here expressed, we are well persuaded, never entered into the mind of an uninspired man: nor do we conceive that it can be expressed with equal brevity and elegance in any other language under heaven. Parents instinctively feel a most tender affection for their offspring. Even the brute creation are penetrated with it perhaps as strongly as the human kind. It arises out of the relation in which they stand to the object of their regards. Now such an attachment we should feel towards all the members of Christ's mystical body: yea, we should not merely feel it, as from instinct, but *cultivate it from principle*[f]. But, inasmuch as this may be only, as it were, an animal feeling, we must have it tempered and refined "with brotherly love." In brotherly love there is an union proceeding from a correspondence of mind, and a reciprocation of good offices and kind returns: and this feeling united with the former, knits together the hearts of men in a way that cannot be expressed, nor indeed conceived by any, who are not themselves the subjects of it. It exists not in nature: it is produced only by grace: but wherever it does exist, it raises the object so high in our estimation, that we seem to ourselves low in comparison of him; and, consequently, it makes us "prefer him in honour before ourselves." This sentiment is always mutual: each party casts a veil over the defects of the other, and views only his excellencies; whilst, on the other hand, he is slow to admire his own virtues, and intent rather on humbling himself for his faults. This disposition, I say, believers cultivate towards all who are of the household of faith; and all of them thus meeting together upon the same ground, "each esteems the other better than himself[g]."

[d] Acts xx. 24.
[e] Acts iv. 19, 20.
[f] φιλόστοργοι.
[g] Phil. ii. 3.

Now then we call upon you, brethren, to shew forth this fruit of the grace ye have received. This is the kind of love, and this the measure, which you are to manifest towards all the children of God: and in proportion only as you manifest it, have you any evidence that you belong to Christ[h]. "If you love him that begat, you cannot but love those who are begotten of him."]

2. Of diligence—

[Religion is not a sentimental feeling only, but a practical and influential power. It produces energy and activity in every soul in which it resides. It regards sloth as one of its most destructive adversaries; and maintains against it an incessant warfare. Believer, hear your duty in relation to this important matter: you must "not be slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Whatever be the office which you have to perform, it is assigned you by the Lord Jesus Christ, whose servant you are: and you must address yourself to it with an energy of mind, putting forth all your vigour, to execute it as speedily and as completely as you can. You must shake off sloth and listlessness; ever remembering, that "he who is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster." It is wisely ordained of God that "the idle soul shall suffer hunger, but that the diligent hand shall make rich." "Whatever therefore your hand findeth to do, do it with all your might." The consideration, that in all that you are called to do you serve the Lord Christ, should be a constant stimulus to your mind. This is particularly and strongly set forth by the Apostle in relation to servants[i] ——— and it applies equally to every person under heaven. O, contemplate that passage in reference to yourselves, and to all the duties of your place and station: and, whether you have received more or less to trade with, labour to improve it to the utmost before the day of reckoning shall arrive. But bear in mind, that your diligence will then only be regarded as a service done to Christ, when you act from an immediate regard to his authority, and with a special view to his glory.]

3. Of constancy—

[In your endeavours to serve the Lord, you will doubtless have to encounter many difficulties. There will be "fightings without, and fears within." But, whatever tribulation you may be called to suffer for the Lord's sake, you must look to the end for a sure and ample recompence of all your labours, and patiently endure whatever God may see fit to lay upon you,

[h] John xiii. 34, 35. and 1 John iii. 14. [i] Col. iii. 22—24.

calling upon him continually for mercy, and for grace to help you in the time of need. This is the direction given you in our text; you are to be "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer." You are "never to faint or be weary in well-doing;" but to take the promises of God as your support; and in humble confidence that not one jot or tittle of them shall ever fail, you are to "hold fast the rejoicing of your hope firm unto the end." The husbandman plows in hope and sows in hope, and waits patiently for the harvest: and thus must you do. There may be many a storm, and many a blighting wind; but you must commit your every care to God, and expect from him a full, a rich, a sure reward: for his unchanging promise is, that "in due season you shall reap, if you faint not." At times you will find prayer a most arduous task: there is in the heart of man a continual proneness to draw back from God, and to restrain prayer before him. But you must not yield to this sad propensity: you must "continue instant in prayer;" knowing that, "if you ask not, you cannot have;" but if you persevere in earnest and importunate supplications, you must, you cannot but, prevail; yea, you shall be "more than conqueror over all" that can oppose your spiritual progress.]

SEE then from hence what true religion is;

1. How extensive in its offices!

[It comprehends the whole circle of good and evil; it prescribes a line of conduct for us in every thing that relates either to God or man: it occupies, and calls forth into action, every faculty of the soul. Its energies are universal, and without intermission. As reason sits at the helm, and directs the course of the natural man, being so incorporated with him, as it were, as to regulate him unsolicited and unperceived, so does religion preside in the soul of the spiritual man, and direct him in whatever relates either to time or eternity. There is nothing, either great or small, on which it does not exert an influence. O brethren, seek to have religion enthroned in your hearts, and performing in your minds the same offices as reason executes in the minds of unconverted men. Let it be a living principle within you, regulating your every action, word, and thought.]

2. How lovely in its operations!

[See religion putting Christ's yoke upon rebellious man, and "bringing his every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ[k]:" see it giving to man the very mind of Christ; making him love what Christ loves, and hate what Christ

[k] 2 Cor. x. 5.

hates, and walking in all things as Christ walked: see it uniting in the bonds of tenderest love the whole family of Christ: see it stirring up every member of that family to activity in all the duties of his place and station, that none shall have any fault to find against him, or any negligence to lay to his charge: and lastly, see it bringing him into a state of habitual fellowship with his God, and a blessed foretaste of the glory that shall be revealed. Is not *this* good? Is not this lovely? Yes, inexpressibly lovely is it: and if men "see not a beauty and a comeliness in it for which it is to be desired," it is because "they are blinded by the god of this world[1]." O beloved, seek to recommend the Gospel, by thus imbibing its spirit, and exhibiting its efficacy in your lives. Let not your hatred of sin, or your love of holiness, be questioned for one moment: but press forward in the habitual exercise of humble love, of unremitting diligence, and of unshaken constancy; "that men, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in heaven."]

[1] 2 Cor. v. 4.

MDCCCCIX.

SYMPATHY RECOMMENDED.

Rom. xii. 15. *Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.*

AS creatures, we have many duties to perform towards our Creator: and, as members of one universal family, we have duties also towards each other. We all participate one common lot. The present state is subject to great varieties of good and evil; and all in their turn experience occasional alternations of joy and sorrow, of elevation and depression. In these successive changes, we naturally look for some to sympathize with us. We expect, that they who are partakers of humanity, should feel some interest in our affairs: and, if we find no one that has a heart in unison with our own, we seem to ourselves as outcasts from the human race. Now the dispositions which we expect to find exercised towards us, we are called to exercise towards others. The joys and sorrows of others should, as it were by sympathy, be

made our own: we should "rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep."

That this grace may be more cultivated amongst us, we will endeavour to shew,

I. The nature and extent of Christian sympathy—

Sympathy is that feeling of the mind whereby we enter into the concerns of others as if they were our own. Not that we are to interfere with others as "busy-bodies in other men's matters;" but we should have such a friendly disposition towards them, as to participate both in their joys and sorrows, and to have corresponding emotions excited by them in our own minds. This is a duty incumbent on every child of man: "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth[a]:" And again, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others[b]."

Now,

1. There is scope for the exercise of this grace *in reference to men's temporal concerns*—

[Are any afflicted in mind, or body, or estate? We should be ready to act towards them as Job's friends did under his afflictions: "they met by appointment, to mourn with him and to comfort him; and they were so overwhelmed with his sorrows, that they were incapacitated for any active exertions in his behalf for the space of seven days and seven nights[c]." This silence of theirs has been misconstrued by many, as if the time so spent had been occupied in uncharitable reflections, to which they dared not give vent. But those who have been conversant with scenes of woe, and have been suitably impressed by them, will be at no loss to account for the effect produced: lighter sorrows would soon have called forth observations of some kind, either from the sufferer or his friends: but such overwhelming griefs as his, astonished, stupified, and silenced all: and in proportion as our sympathy is deep, will be the reverential awe with which we shall approach the sufferer, and the tender caution with which we shall address him.

It may be said, that such feelings well became them, as friends of the afflicted saint; but that it is unreasonable to look for any such emotions towards a stranger, and still more towards an enemy. To this we answer, that, though friendship

[a] 1 Cor. x. 24. [b] Phil. ii. 4. See also Heb. xiii. 3.
[c] Job ii. 11—13.

will of course heighten our feelings, and more exquisite sensations will be excited in us by the sight of a suffering *saint*, who is as a member of Christ's body[d], than would be called forth towards one who stood in no such relation to Christ, yet our compassion should be deep and tender towards all. The good Samaritan has shewn us how we should act towards any one, even though he should be of a nation that is hostile to us[e]: and David has shewn us how we should conduct ourselves towards him, even though he were our bitterest enemy: "When they were sick," says he, "my clothing was sackcloth; and I humbled my soul with fasting: I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother[f]."

In like manner we should be prepared to rejoice with those who are brought into circumstances of a more pleasing nature. We see an example of this in the friends of Elizabeth. It was reckoned a great affliction to a woman to be barren: and such had Elizabeth been, till she was arrived at an age when she had no reasonable expectation of ever seeing her shame removed. But it pleased God in his mercy to visit her, and to give her a son in her old age: and when she was delivered of the child, her friends and relations came from every quarter to congratulate her on the happy event[g]. This was a fruit and evidence of their love: and wherever love is, it will be sure to operate in this manner: we shall not be indifferent to the happiness of others, but shall find our own augmented by every accession of happiness to our neighbour: and, if "a man who has recovered his straying sheep," or "a woman who has found her lost piece of money," call upon us for our congratulations[h], we shall feel real delight in the exercise and expression of our most benevolent affections.

Such is the disposition which we should cultivate towards all the sons and daughters of affliction; for in the exercise of it we perform a most important duty towards them, as members of one common family; and at the same time we resemble our common Parent, of whom it is said, that "his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel," and, that "he delighteth also in the prosperity of his servants."]

2. But the most urgent calls for it are *in reference to men's spiritual concerns*—

[The joys or sorrows which arise from the things of time and sense are comparatively of little consequence: but those that are connected with the eternal world are of infinite importance. Are any of our fellow-creatures mourning by reason

[d] 1 Cor. xii. 25, 26. [e] Luke x. 30—37. [f] Ps. xxxv. 13, 14.
[g] Luke i. 57, 58. [h] Luke xv. 4—6, 8, 9.

of their sins, which have grown up unto heaven, and are a load upon their conscience too heavy for them to bear? How should we pant after an opportunity to make known to them the glad tidings of salvation through a crucified Redeemer; that so we may "give unto them the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness!" Are any in danger of being "turned away from their steadfastness?" How should we burn with holy impatience to ascertain their state, and to "establish their hearts[i]!" In a word, we should so feel with all the members of Christ's mystical body, as to be able to say with the Apostle, "Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not[k]?"

Nor should our compassion be withheld from those who are insensible of their guilt and danger: on the contrary, they on this very account require it so much the more. Like Paul, we should "have continual heaviness and sorrow in our hearts for our brethren's sake[l];" and, like our blessed Lord, we should weep over them, though we knew that they were just ready to imbrue their hands in our blood[m].

If, on the other hand, any return to their Father's house, how should we rejoice over them, and join in the pious festivities of prayer and praise[n]! If afterwards they advance in the divine life, our joy and exultation should be proportionably increased[o]. The angels in heaven are not indifferent spectators of such events[p]; and should *we?* No: next to the salvation of our own souls, we should pant after, and delight in, the spiritual welfare of all around us.]

Such is the nature, and such the extent, of Christian sympathy: the value of which, however, will be better seen, if we consider,

II. The benefits resulting from it—

It is of incalculable use,

1. To him by whom it is exercised—

[The heart of man by nature is selfish: but grace expands it; and, by interesting it in the behalf of others, gives scope for the exercise of better feelings. The man whose cares and pleasures centre all in self, has his happiness extremely contracted, at the same time that it is also of a low and sordid character. But the man who has learned to sympathize with others, derives pleasure from all around him, and makes all the happiness he beholds his own. The smiles of universal nature,

[i] 1 Thess. iii. 5. [k] 2 Cor. xi. 29. [l] Rom. ix. 2.
[m] Luke xix. 41. [n] Luke xv. 24, 32.
[o] 1 Thess. iii. 6—10. [p] Luke xv. 7, 10

the shining of the sun, the verdure of the fields, the cheerful aspect of the different tribes and orders of the animal creation, all diffuse a peace and serenity through his mind, and draw forth into exercise the principles of benevolence within him. The comforts also with which the various classes of his fellow-creatures are favoured, inspire him with a sense of gratitude to the great Source of all. The accounts which from time to time he hears of the wider spread of religion, and the consequent augmentation of happiness in the world, fill him with joy, and stir him up to the delightful employment of prayer and praise. Thus his sources of happiness are greatly multiplied, whilst the sensations of it are purified and refined.

If it be said, that by sympathy with the afflicted his pains are also multiplied; we answer, that *in appearance* they are so, but that *in reality* they are not. True it is, that many things which others behold without emotion, create within him a sensation of grief: but it must be remembered, that the grief of sympathy does not corrode, like other grief: on the contrary, it induces what, if it did not sound too paradoxical, we would call, a pleasurable pain. The sigh of pity and the tear of love may, in this respect, be compared with the sighs and tears of penitential sorrow: they diffuse a sweetness over the mind, as being evidences of the operation of a gracious principle, which God approves: whilst at the same time they reconcile a man to all his own personal trials, which always appear the lighter, in proportion as he is conversant with the trials of those around him.

Thus the very exercise of sympathy has its own reward.]

2. To those towards whom it is exercised—

[The sympathy of a friend does not at all affect *the causes* of sorrow; but it most materially affects *its pressure* upon the mind. It is as if a person took hold of a load which almost crushed us with its weight, and bore a part of it together with us. The very opening of our griefs is itself somewhat of a relief to a burthened soul: and the beholding of another, under the influence of love, participating with us our sorrows, and making them his own, wonderfully assuages the pain we feel. The sense we have of his kindness operates as a balm to heal our wounds. By the love we experience, our thoughts are diverted from the troubles we endure; and are turned for a season into the more pleasing channel of reciprocal affection, and of gratitude to a gracious God. Thus, by means of sympathy, the sorrows of the afflicted are greatly lightened.

On the other hand, the joys of any person are by the same means greatly increased. By every fresh congratulation, they are revived in the mind from time to time: the fire, which, for

want of such stirrings, would have languished, is resuscitated; and oil is poured, as it were, upon the flame.]

But these things are rather matters of experience than of abstract discussion: to be known and understood, they must be felt.]

3. To the Church at large—

[Where these amiable feelings are displayed in full force and activity, the cause of Christ is greatly promoted. The beauty and excellence of Christianity is seen. Men cannot, or will not, judge of it from its principles; but they cannot help judging of it from the effects which they behold. The persons who beheld our blessed Lord at the tomb of Lazarus, were struck with his sympathy in this particular view: "When Jesus saw Mary weeping, and the Jews also weeping who came with her, he groaned in his spirit, and was troubled: and, on his coming to the grave, Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, *Behold, how he loved him*[q]!" So, when persons behold Christians participating with others freely in their joys and sorrows, they are constrained to say, Behold how these Christians love one another; yea, and not one another only, but all around them, strangers and enemies, as well as friends! The prevalence of such dispositions goes further to silence gainsayers, and to win souls, than all the most laboured arguments of learned theories: religion speaks to them here in a language which they cannot but understand and feel.]

Here, in conclusion, we are constrained to OBSERVE,

1. How poor and inefficacious is the religion of the world!

[The world's religion consists almost entirely of forms, of forms without either life or power. Certainly Christianity, even as professed by the world, has advanced the cause of general benevolence: but that benevolence extends not to the concerns of the soul. A worldly Christian can see thousands perishing in their sins, and not stretch out a hand to their relief, nor utter one sigh on their account: and, as for all experimental religion, whether of joy or sorrow, he derides it as the fruit of a weak or distempered imagination. The character of such persons may be seen in the elder brother in the parable, who, when solicited to join in the festivities occasioned by his brother's return, vented his spleen in unkind reflections, both on the prodigal who had returned, and on his father who had received him to his arms. The most benevolent of worldly men has not a string in his heart that is in unison with one who is cast down with penitential sorrow, or that is exalted with the joys of faith. No: his principles rise not so

[q] John xi. 33—36.

high: his convictions are only intellectual; and they can never be productive of what is spiritual. Even in their *moral* effects they operate to but a small extent: but, in respect of *spiritual* sympathy, they bear no fruit at all. O, brethren, see from hence how poor and defective that religion is which generally passes under the name of Christianity: it is Christianity without Christ, in its principles; it is Christianity without love, in its effects. It boasts itself to have proceeded from the Sun of Righteousness; but it has neither the light nor heat that proceed from his glorious rays: it is a shadow without a substance; a name without a reality. If it proceeded really from Christ, it would make us to resemble him in our spirit and our conduct.]

2. How lovely and operative is the religion of Christ!

[Sympathy is of the very essence of Christ's religion: "Bear ye one another's burthens," says the Apostle, "and so fulfil the law of Christ[r]." Yes: he has taught us this both by precept and example: he bids us "love one another, *as he has loved us*[s]." And how has he loved us? He pitied us in our fallen state, and came down from the bosom of his Father to seek and save us. And during the whole of his abode upon earth, but more especially in his last hours, "he bare our infirmities, and carried our sorrows[t]." And at this present moment we are authorized to say, that "he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities[u]," and that there is neither a benefit nor an injury that we receive, but he feels it as done immediately to himself[x]. Such is the effect which the Gospel produces upon all who receive it in spirit and in truth. Let a sense of Christ's love to us be duly impressed on our hearts; and it will immediately excite in us a love to all mankind, though in a more especial manner to the household of faith. See, with your own eyes, brethren; What is it that has given birth to Bible Societies, and Mission Societies, and to numberless other institutions that respect the welfare of men's souls? It is the Gospel: the Gospel, faithfully administered, and affectionately received. Such ever was, and ever will be, the fruit of faith; for "faith worketh by love." Seek ye then to become possessed of a true and living faith: and know, that the more entirely you live by faith on the Son of God, as having loved you, and given himself for you, the more you will drink into his spirit, and be transformed into his blessed image: nor will you fix any other bounds to your sympathies, than he has affixed to his[y].]

[r] Gal. vi. 2. [s] John xv. 12. [t] Isai. liii. 4. Matt. viii. 17.
[u] Heb. iv. 15. [x] Matt. xxv. 4. Acts ix. 4. Zech. ii. 8.
[y] Here open and recommend any CHARITABLE INSTITUTION, as affording an occasion for the exercise of this virtue.

MDCCCCX.

OVERCOMING EVIL WITH GOOD.

Rom. xii. 21. *Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

THE writings of the Old Testament exhibit a system of morals incomparably superior to any that was ever promulgated by the wisest philosophers. In extent it equals the New Testament. It is quite a mistake to say that our Lord inculcated sublimer morals than ever had been revealed before: he only removed the false glosses by which the commands of God had been obscured, and enforced the observance of those commands by motives of a higher nature. Still however it must be confessed, that the New Testament brings the sublimer precepts more clearly into view, and expatiates upon them in a more authoritative and convincing manner. This appears in the injunction before us, which is as concise, as comprehensive, as forcible, as words could express it.

In discoursing upon this precept we shall endeavour to mark,

I. Its import—

The "evil" here spoken of does not relate to sin, but to suffering; and comprehends all those injuries, whether real or imaginary, which we are called to endure. In reference to this, two questions arise:

1. When may we be said to be overcome by it?

[We are not overcome by evil merely because we are crushed by it; for St. Paul, when "pressed out of measure by his troubles in Asia," "thanks God for enabling him always to triumph in Christ[a]:" and declares that while "we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter, we may be more than conquerors[b]." But we are then vanquished by it, *when we are diverted by it from the path of duty.*

Suppose on account of the trial being exceeding heavy, we are tempted to doubt whether it can, or will, be overruled for our good: then we are vanquished; because we question the truth of God, who has said, that "*all* things should work

[a] 2 Cor. i. 8. and ii. 14. [b] Rom. viii. 36, 37.

together for his people's good:" our faith has failed, and we are overcome.

Suppose the injury done to us has irritated and inflamed our minds, so that we give way to anger and impatience: then also we are overcome; because we ought to "possess our souls in patience[c]," and to "let patience have its perfect work, that we may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing[d]."

Suppose, though no particular vehemence shew itself at the time, we yet are induced to harbour secret resentment in our minds against our enemy: then we are overcome; because we should love our enemies[e], and be more concerned for the evil which they do to their own souls, than for any thing which they do, or can do, to us.

Suppose, either through the fear of evil, or through actual distress, we are induced to relax our zeal in the Lord's service, or to make any sinful concessions, then also we are vanquished: for we submit to sin rather than to suffering; we have failed in our integrity; we are overcome. We should value a good conscience more than life itself[f]; and when we make shipwreck of it, we shew that our enemy has gained the victory over us.

If we hold fast our faith, our patience, our love, our integrity, then are we conquerors, even though we die in the conflict: but if in any of these respects we fail, then are we overcome, even though we crush our adversary, and defeat his more immediate projects.]

2. How are we to overcome it—

[We gain a victory over it in part, when we do not suffer it to injure our souls. But we must not be contented with such a negative triumph; we should endeavour to overcome the hostility of our enemy; and this can be effected only by returns of good. "If he curse, we must bless; if he despitefully use us and persecute us, we must pity him and pray for him[g]." "If he hunger, we must feed him; if he thirst, we must give him drink;" with all the tenderness and compassion that we would to a querulous and untoward infant[h]. We shall in this way "heap coals of fire upon his head," to melt him into love[i]. It is true, many are so obdurate, that no returns of good can ever dissolve their hearts: yet the effect of such persevering kindness, is inconceivably great, and will sometimes extort confessions of our innocence, even from the most infuriated enemies. We can scarcely find in the annals of the world a more cruel or inverate enemy than Saul; yet

[c] Luke xxi. 19. [d] Jam. i. 4. [e] Luke vi. 35.
[f] John xii. 25. [g] Matt. v. 44.
[h] ψώμιζε means, '*Feed him as an infant.*' Rom. xii. 20.
[i] Rom. xii. 20.

David's repeated exercises of forbearance and kindness towards him constrained him to confess his own wickedness, and the distinguished excellence of the person whom he persecuted[k]. Such a victory as that is greater than the most successful warrior could ever boast: and we should aim at similar conquests: we should strive, not to crush our enemy by force, but to overcome his enmity by love.]

We cannot dismiss such an important precept as this without endeavouring more distinctly to set before you,

II. Its excellence—

The moment that the precept is presented to the mind we cannot fail of admiring its simplicity, and, at the same time, its depth. But that our views of it may be more distinct, we observe,

1. It counteracts all our evil propensities—

[When we are injured or insulted, what a tumult of passion is apt to arise in our breast; and how ready are we to render evil for evil! If we forbear avenging ourselves at the time either by word or deed, we still feel a disposition to retaliate, and are ready to wreak our vengeance upon our adversary by private complaints of his conduct, though from prudence or timidity we do not maintain a contest with him to his face. Long and bitter are the resentments of many, even while they appear to be reconciled, and perhaps delude themselves with the confidence that they have forgiven their enemy. But this precept lays the axe to the root of all secret animosity as well as open hostility. It goes not to the act merely, but to the principle; it requires that all the enmity that is in our hearts should be slain; and that love alone should reign there. Were this once effected, there is not an evil in the soul which would not have received its death wound: for "love is the fulfilling of the law."]

2. It assimilates us to Jesus Christ—

[To what an extent has our blessed Lord carried this principle! When we were his enemies, yea, when the whole universe were up in arms against him, he did not execute upon *us* the vengeance we deserved, but came down from heaven to convert and save us. And by what means did he propose to save us? Was it by a mere act of power? No: it was by bearing our sins, and dying in our stead. What astonishing love was this! But further, when he had come into the

[k] 1 Sam. xxiv. 10, 11, 16—18. and xxvi. 21.

world, and his people with one voice had put him to death, still, so far from bearing resentment against them in his heart, he, after he had risen from the dead, commanded that his Gospel should be preached first of all in that city where he had been crucified, and that the offers of salvation should be first made to the very people who had imbrued their hands in his blood[l]. And how glorious were the triumphs of his love! By the very first sermon that was preached in his name, three thousand of his enemies were convinced of their wickedness, and brought to repentance. Similar to this was the mercy he vouchsafed to the persecuting, blaspheming Saul: he appeared to him in the midst of his mad career, and, by this transcendent act of love, changed a bitter and cruel enemy into a holy and active Apostle. Thus he overcame evil with good; and in proportion as we imitate his conduct we shall be transformed into his likeness.]

3. It would make a very heaven upon earth—

[What a very hell is this world, where the passions are let loose, and men are left to perpetrate all that is in their hearts! Even under the restraint of wholesome laws there are so many quarrels generated, and so many resentments harboured, that there is scarcely a society or a family in which real harmony prevails. But if this precept were universally obeyed, how different a world would this appear? From the combating of evil with love, there would soon be no evil to contend with: for certainly they who rendered nothing but good unto their enemies, would never render evil to their friends; or if any unintentional evil were done, the very remembrance of it would be quickly lost in returns of love. O blessed state! When shall the happy time arrive, when "the wolf and the lamb shall thus dwell together, and the child shall have no ill to fear when playing on the hole of the asp, or of the cockatrice den?" Surely this may well be called, "The reign of Christ upon earth;" for it will be the brightest image of heaven, or rather heaven itself come down on earth.]

As a further IMPROVEMENT of this precept, we shall,

1. Guard it—

[We are not to imagine that this precept requires us to renounce our *civil rights;* for St. Paul, on proper occasions, asserted his rights as a Roman citizen[m]: nor does an obedience to it preclude the exercise of *legitimate authority;* for the magistrate would have been invested with power to no

[l] Luke xxiv. 47.
[m] Acts xvi. 37. and xxii. 25. and xxv. 10, 11.

purpose, if he were not allowed to exercise it in the support of virtue and the punishment of vice[n]. Parents, masters, ministers, must exercise the authority committed to them. It is the vindictive disposition that is forbidden, and the unwearied exercise of love that is inculcated — — —]

2. Enforce it—

[Many arguments will arise in our corrupt minds against the discharge of this sublime and self-denying duty. 'The persons who have used us ill, do not deserve kind treatment; and the exercise of continued kindness to them will only encourage them to proceed in their injurious conduct; whereas a proper display of spirit on our part will tend to intimidate and restrain them.' This may appear to be just reasoning; but it is directly contrary to God's command. We are not to consider what others deserve to suffer, but what we are required to do. As to the use that others will make of our kindness, that is no concern of ours; we have only to obey God, and leave all events to him. To yield, to turn the left cheek to him that smites us on the right, and to return good for evil, may sound to us as "hard sayings;" but they are the path of duty, of honour, and of happiness — — —]

3. Give directions for the performance of it—

[*Get a deep sense of your own vileness.*—When you are thoroughly sensible how many talents you owe to your Heavenly Master, you will not very readily take your fellow-servant by the throat for the few pence that he may owe to you.

Contemplate frequently the mercy which Christ has vouchsafed, and is daily vouchsafing, to you.—How will this put you to shame, when you feel the risings of anger or revenge against even your bitterest enemy! Surely you will fall upon your knees before God, and pray for grace to "forgive others even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you:" and *that* not thrice, or "seven times, but seventy times seven."

Be much in prayer to God for the assistance of his Holy Spirit.—Without his aid you can do nothing: but there is nothing so great, which you shall not be able to do through Christ strengthening you[o].]

[n] Rom. xiii. 4. [o] Phil. iv. 13.

MDCCCCXI.

DUTY TO CIVIL GOVERNORS.

Rom. xiii. 1—7. *Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist*

shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

THE office of ministers is, to preach the Gospel of Christ. But whilst they preach the *doctrines* of the Gospel, they must not overlook its *duties;* nor, in stating its duties, must they pass by those which pertain to us as members of a civil community, any more than those which concern us in any other station or relation of life. On the contrary, St. Paul gave to Titus, and in him to all other ministers, this express injunction: "Put them (the professors of Christianity) in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, and to obey magistrates[a]. In this also St. Paul himself has set us an example; and *that* too with a fulness and minuteness far beyond what he had resorted to on any other branch of Christian morals. There was perhaps a reason for his doing this in his Epistle to the Romans, rather than in any other of his epistles. Rome was the seat of the imperial government; and there, for a very long period, the Jews had been in bad repute, as a rebellious people. Nor was this without reason: for the Jews had an idea that they *ought* not to submit to any other governor than one raised up from among their own brethren: and from hence they were frequently led to resist the civil magistrates; especially at those seasons when the revenue was collected[b]. In these sentiments the Christians also were supposed to participate. It was desirable therefore that the Apostle should put them on their guard; because, if

[a] Tit. iii. 1. [b] Acts v. 37. and Luke xiii. 1.

they should indeed be found enemies to the government under which they lived, they would furnish the heathen with an unanswerable argument against them, and would, in fact, arm all the civil powers for their destruction. On the other hand, if the Christians at Rome should shew themselves peaceable and obedient subjects, they would conciliate the regard of their governors, and recommend a similar conduct in all other places.

In the passage before us, the Apostle shews us,

I. In what light civil magistrates should be viewed—

By whatever name the ruling powers are designated among men, they are to be regarded as,

1. Governors for God—

[God is the Governor of all the earth: and, as all power is derived from him, so all power is delegated by him; the possessor of it being his representative and vicegerent. Even in heaven he has established different ranks and orders among the angels[c]: and on earth also he has seen fit that a similar order should be maintained. Nay, when there were yet but two people upon the earth, he ordained that one should rule the other[d]. From that time the parents were the natural governors of their children: and, as successive families were formed, the rising generations continued under the same head, as branches from the same root. When these families became a tribe, the original parent was still the head of that tribe. Thus as mankind were multiplied upon the face of the earth, the different nations, too numerous and widely spread to be governed by one man, had their respective governors, some in one way, and some in another. Whatever shape the different governments assumed, monarchical, aristocratical, or democratical, still the power was God's, in whomsoever it was vested: and, as his representatives, they possessed and exercised a portion of his authority: "There is no power, but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God:" "the pillars of the earth are the Lord's; and he hath set the world upon them[e]."]

2. Benefactors from God—

[The office of magistrates is to do all in their power for the suppression of iniquity, and for the promotion of universal happiness. It is for these ends alone that power is put

[c] Eph. i. 21. Jude, ver. 9. [d] Gen. iii. 16. [e] 1 Sam. ii. 8.

into their hands. They are to be "a terror to the workers of iniquity," and "not to bear the sword in vain:" but to all others they are "ministers for good," protecting them in the peaceful enjoyment of every earthly blessing. Would we conceive aright of the benefits we derive from our government, let us imagine such a state of things existing amongst us as occasionally existed in the land of Israel, when "there was no king in Israel, and every one did what was right in his own eyes[f]:" what enormities would be committed in every quarter of the land! If for the space of three days only all the functions of government were suspended, and all were left at liberty to perpetrate whatever came into their hearts, we should soon see how much we have been indebted to the legislature for enacting wholesome laws, and to the magistracy for enforcing them. To the government we owe it, that our persons are safe from injury, and our property from the depredation of lawless violence: and whilst "we sit, each under his own vine and fig-tree, none making us afraid," we should feel our obligations to those, who, by God's ordinance, have been, and continue day by day to be, the means and instruments of all our comfort. What Tertullus said in a way of flattery to Felix, we may, with the strictest truth, say respecting our governors, that "by them we enjoy great quietness, and by their providence very worthy deeds are done to our whole nation[g]."]

From this view of their character, we are prepared to hear,

II. What regard should be paid to them—

The relation of ruler and subject necessarily brings with it corresponding duties. Whilst they are caring and labouring for us, it is our duty,

1. To honour their persons—

[God says, respecting himself, "If I be a Father, where is my honour? if I be a master, where is my fear?" A portion of the same regard is due to magistrates also, as his representatives and vicegerents upon earth. Hence, in reference to them, it is said in our text, "Render unto all their dues; fear, to whom fear is due; and honour to whom honour." To speak harshly or contemptuously of them is highly unbecoming. To "despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities," are among the leading features of many who are a scandal to the Christian name[h]. We should consider, that they are necessitated to see with other eyes, and to hear with other

[f] Judg. xvii. 6. and xxi. 25. [g] Acts xxiv. 2. [h] Jude, ver. 8.

ears, than their own: that, for what they do they may have many reasons, which we are not acquainted with: that, if in any thing they err, it may be with the best intentions. In a word, we should form the most favourable judgment of all that they do, and give them credit for their motives, where we cannot altogether approve their actions. If we cannot praise, we should at least abstain from uttering against them any complaints and murmurs, or from speaking of them in disrespectful terms. What shame did Paul take to himself for uttering a reproachful word against his unjust and persecuting judge! he confesses that in so doing he had violated an express command, which says, "Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people[l]."

We should guard against an acrimonious sentiment arising in our hearts[k]: and even when we are constrained to disapprove their conduct, instead of reviling them, we should cast a veil over their faults, as a duteous child would do over the faults of his parent.]

2. To submit to their authority—

[If a ruler enjoin any thing that is manifestly contrary to an express command of God, or forbid any thing which God has clearly enjoined, we are then to "obey God rather than man." The Hebrew Youths did right in refusing to fall down before the golden idol; as did Daniel also in continuing to offer supplications before his God. The commands of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius, though the greatest potentates on earth, were of no weight against the paramount authority of God. But where the laws that are enacted by human authority are not contrary to the revealed will of God, they must be obeyed; and *that* too, whether the authority that enforces them be subordinate or supreme: for thus says the Apostle Peter; "Submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well: for so is the will of God[l]." And this allegiance is due from all persons, whatever be their rank, or age, or occupation; "Let *every* soul be subject to the higher powers:" and, if any take upon themselves to "resist the power, they shall receive to themselves damnation;" they shall be condemned before an earthly tribunal for violating the established laws; and they shall be yet further visited with God's indignation in another world, for having set at nought "*his* ordinances," and opposed themselves to *his* authority[m]. We must therefore "be subject to the magistrate, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake."]

[l] Acts xxiii. 2—5. [k] Eccl. x. 20. [l] 1 Pet. ii. 13—15
[m] See 2 Pet. ii. 10, 13. and Jude, ver. 8, 13.

3. To support his office—

[Where power is vested for the public good, there must also expense be, to defray the charges of the dignity attached to it. All the functions of government also must of necessity be attended with expense, which the public of course must support. Hence there must be taxes of different kinds, some stated, as "tribute," and some occasional, as "custom," upon articles of commerce. These are "due" to the civil magistrate, and must be paid with cheerfulness and punctuality. There must be no endeavour, no wish, to evade any tax whatever. To defraud the revenue, is to defraud not the government only, but every person that contributes to the support of government; since, if the imposts that are laid on, prove inadequate to the necessities of the state, other taxes must be levied to supply the deficiency; and thus the honest must be burthened to pay what has been withheld by the dishonest. This is thought by many to be a light matter: and persons who are well able to pay their quota to the public purse, are not ashamed to defraud the revenue; yea, they will even boast of it, when they might with as much propriety boast of the most disgraceful actions they could possibly commit. Our blessed Lord, when, strictly speaking, he was not bound to pay a tax that was levied, chose to pay it, and even wrought a miracle in order to pay it; because he would not offend the collectors, who would have been unable to appreciate the grounds whereon he might have claimed an exemption[n]. Thus should we do: we should rather exceed on the side of liberality, than fall short through a want of integrity, or of zeal for the public service. To grudge such payments is most unreasonable and wicked. What would be thought of a man who should employ a watchman to protect his property, and then rob the watchman of his hire? Yet this is what we do, when by any means whatever we defraud the revenue: for rulers and magistrates are "ministers of God, attending continually upon this very thing:" their time is occupied in the discharge of their high office; and they have a claim upon us for whatever is necessary for the maintenance of their dignity, and the execution of their trust. We must therefore "render to all their dues; tribute, to whom tribute is due; and custom, to whom custom;" and, if in any respect or degree we withhold it from them, we differ but little from him who plunders their house, or robs them on the highway.]

We conclude with adding such ADVICE as the occasion requires—

[n] Matt. xvii. 24—27.

1. Be thankful for the constitution under which you live—

[It is generally agreed by those who have studied the constitution of Britain, that it is the most perfect of any upon earth. In no other state under heaven is there a greater measure of liberty combined with the same measure of security and strength. The extent of our civil and religious liberties is justly the boast of all who have the happiness to live in our favoured land. How different is our condition from that of the Roman empire in the time of Nero, the time when St. Paul wrote this epistle! How different also we may add from the situation of our own country in the days of Mary, when so many of the excellent of the earth were burnt to death, for worshipping God according to their conscience! In our happy land, the poorest man amongst us is as much protected in his person and property as the richest; nor can the king himself oppress him contrary to law. Let us then be thankful for these mercies; and let us rally round the Constitution, to support it against all the devices of the disaffected, and the conspiracies of wicked men[o]. If Christians under such a government as that of Nero were so strictly enjoined to approve themselves loyal and faithful, much more it is our duty to be so under such a government as ours.]

2. Walk worthy of that better kingdom of which you profess to be subjects—

[This improvement of our subject is suggested by our Lord himself; who, on a question being put to him respecting the payment of tribute to the Roman governor, answered, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's[p]." God, as we have before said, is the great Governor of all the earth; and he has established a kingdom, even the kingdom of his dear Son, who is 'King of kings, and Lord of lords." Now, as Christians, you profess to be the subjects of Christ; and you owe an unreserved obedience to all his commands. Under him you enjoy the most perfect liberty and protection, from sin and Satan, death and hell. For every act of fidelity towards him, you shall have an appropriate measure of "praise;" nor have you the smallest reason to fear his wrath, if you yield a prompt obedience to his commands. The approbation of earthly princes, and the rewards conferred by them, pertain to this life only; but those which our blessed Lord will confer,

[o] Preached Feb. 9, 1817, on occasion of the assault made upon the Prince Regent, and of the proofs of conspiracies submitted to both the Houses of Parliament a few days before.

[p] Matt. xxii. 17—21.

extend also to the life to come. "Be strong, therefore, and very courageous to observe and do all that he commands[q]." Honour him in your hearts: labour to advance also his interests in the world: account no sacrifice painful that he requires at your hands: but "be ready, if need be, to lay down your lives for his sake." "Be faithful unto death, and he will give you a crown of life."]

[q] Josh. i. 7.

MDCCCCXII.

THE NEARNESS OF SALVATION A MOTIVE TO DILIGENCE.

Rom. xiii. 11. *Now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.*

SO contracted are the views which many have of the Gospel, that they account nothing worthy of that name, except what relates primarily and expressly to the great subject of redemption. But the Gospel comprehends duties as well as privileges: nor can any minister preach it aright, if he do not guard his audience against every species of sin, and inculcate the performance of every kind of duty. Nor are any persons to be excepted from such pastoral charges. The Apostles themselves needed to be warned against hypocrisy[a] and a recurrence to corrupt habits[b]: and they also in their turn have transmitted similar warnings to the Christian world in all ages. It was to "believers" that St. Paul addressed the words before us: and I conceive myself to be discharging a most solemn duty whilst I call your attention to,

I. His injunction—

Every believer is prone to relapse into a state of stupor—

[The "wise virgins slumbered and slept," no less than the foolish[c]. The Church of Ephesus, too, amidst their many exalted virtues, needed to be reproved for having "left their first love[d]." And who does not feel that the caution given to "the children of light" in the Thessalonian Church, is appli-

[a] Luke xii. 1. [b] Luke xxi. 34—36.
[c] Matt. xxv. 5. [d] Rev. ii. 3, 4.

cable to himself[e]? — — — In truth, there are seasons, even with the best of men, when the divine life *comparatively* languishes within them, and when "the things which remain in them are *in appearance at least* ready to die[f]— — —

This may arise from different causes: sometimes from "the cares of this world" pressing upon the mind; sometimes from "the deceitfulness of riches," or the gratifications of sense beguiling the soul[g]; and sometimes from "the abounding of iniquity in those around us[h]." But from whatever it proceeds,]

"It is high time that we awake out of sleep"—

[With all of us much time has been lost: and how little remains, who can tell? At all events we have a great work to do; and no man should relax his labours, till he can say, "Father, I have glorified thee on earth; I have finished the work which thou hast given me to do[i]."

I call you then, my brethren, to arise, and "do your first works," lest God abandon you to the power of your great adversary, and to the evils of your own hearts. If St. Paul felt the need of "keeping his body under and bringing it into subjection, lest by any means, after having preached to others he himself should become a cast-away[k]," think not that such care and such fear are unsuitable to you. To the most stable amongst you I would say, "Beware, lest being led away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own steadfastness[l]; and to the most confident amongst you all, "Be not high-minded, but fear[m]." Let every one of you look to himself, that he lose not the things which he has wrought, but that he receive a full reward[n]."]

To impress on your minds this admonition, let me call your attention to,

II. The consideration with which it is enforced—

"Salvation" is the prize held forth to all who believe in Christ: and who shall adequately express or conceive what is comprehended under this term? — — — Yet this, with all the blessedness attached to it, is daily hastening towards you.

You are daily "nearer" to,

1. The termination of all your conflicts—

[Whilst you are in this life, you must of necessity have trials of some kind to sustain. A corruptible crown is not

[e] 1 Thess. v. 2—7. [f] Rev. iii. 2. [g] Matt. xiii. 22.
[h] Matt. xxiv. 12. [i] John xvii. 4. [k] 1 Cor. ix. 26, 27.
[l] 2 Pet. iii. 17. [m] Rom. xi. 20. [n] 2 John, ver. 8.

gained without much exertion, much less is a heavenly crown: "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence; and the violent take it by force[o]." But "there is a rest remaining for you[p];" and that rest is now very near at hand. Look then at the racer in his course: does not the thought of his having nearly finished his labours animate him to increased exertions? So then should you "forget the things that are behind, and press on to the goal for the prize of your high calling[q];" and never think that you have attained any thing as long as any thing remains to be attained.]

2. The completion of all your hopes—

[Soon will God's work of grace be perfected within you, and "a crown of glory be awarded to you as having been faithful unto death[r]." And will you by listlessness and indifference endanger the loss of all the glory and felicity of heaven? Awake, I say, and "run with patience the race that is set before you, looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of your faith[s]." Make more use of the great principles of the Gospel than ever you have yet done. "Look more to Christ[t]:" "live more entirely by faith upon him[u]." Get his image more formed upon your hearts. Live only for him, and "to him[x]:" and speedily shall you be "seated with him upon his throne[y]," and be a joint-heir with him of his inheritance[z].]

But let me not CLOSE without a few words to *unbelievers*—

[If believers need such an admonition as this, what, think ye, do *ye* need? What words can ever be too strong for *you*, who have never fled to Christ for refuge, or believed in him for the saving of your souls? Truly your *end* also is near: but "who can tell what that end shall be[a]?" Alas! an inspired Apostle declares to you, that "your judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and your damnation slumbereth not[b]." Surely then "it is high time for you to awake out of sleep;" for, if death find you unprepared to meet your God, your condition will be such, that it would be "better for you that you had never been born."]

[o] Matt. xi. 12. [p] Heb. iv. 9. [q] Phil. iii. 13, 14.
[r] Rev. ii. 10. [s] Heb. xii. 2. [t] Isai. xlv. 22.
[u] Gal. ii. 20. [x] Rom. xiv. 7, 8. [y] Rev. iii. 21.
[z] Rom. viii. 17. [a] 1 Pet. iv. 17. [b] 2 Pet. ii. 3.

MDCCCCXIII.

VIGILANCE PRESCRIBED.

Rom. xiii. 12. *The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.*

IT is the distinguished privilege of man that he is able to bring to his recollection things that are past, and to anticipate future events, so as to give them a kind of present existence in his mind. This power is of infinite use to him in the concerns of his soul. By means of it he can ascertain his state before God: he has only to compare the records of conscience with the declarations of God's word, and he can foresee the issue of the final judgment; and derive to himself the strongest arguments for vigilance and zeal. In this view the exhortation before us deserves our deepest attention: and to impress it on our minds, we shall,

I. Confirm the truth of the Apostle's assertion—

[Our Lord, in reference to the season afforded him for accomplishing his Father's work, calls this present life, *day*, and the future, *night*[a]. The Apostle here uses the same metaphors, only reversing the application of them: the present life he designates by the name of "*night*;" and the future, by the appellation of "*day*."

The present life is called "night," because it is a state of intellectual and moral darkness. The ungodly "world are altogether lying in wickedness," and ignorant of all that it concerns them most to know. The regenerate themselves "see but as in a glass darkly;" and, though they be light as day in comparison of carnal men, yet have they but, as it were, the twinkling of the stars, just sufficient to direct their course, or at most but as the early dawn, in comparison of the meridian light which they will hereafter enjoy. Much of sin also yet remains within them: much they do, which they would not; and leave undone, which they would do: by means of which they too often walk in darkness, instead of enjoying the light of God's countenance.

Our future state of existence is called "day," because all, whether godly or ungodly, will behold every thing in its

[a] John ix. 4

true light; and because the empire of sin will be eternally destroyed.

Now this "night is far spent, and the day is at hand." Considering how short the time is that is allotted us on earth, this may be spoken in reference to those who are even in the bloom of life. Twenty or thirty years cut off from the short span of life, may well be thought a great portion of it: and if those years be doubled, we must say indeed, "The night is *far* spent." But whatever be our age, we are equally liable to be called away, and to have our time of probation cut short by death. We ourselves may recollect many, who but a year or two since, appeared as strong and healthy as ourselves, who are now no more. And though we know not whose summons may arrive next, we are sure that, in a year or two more, many (perhaps one in twenty) of us will be fixed in our eternal state.]

But this truth being so clear, we may proceed to,

II. Enforce the exhortation grounded upon it—

[The idea which the Apostle's language first suggests to the mind, is, that we are attacked in our camp, and summoned instantly to arise and fight.

The generality are at ease, involved in "works of darkness;" in works that proceed from the prince of darkness; in works that affect concealment; in works that lead to everlasting darkness and despair. From this state they have no desire to come forth. Even the godly have their "sins which most easily beset them," and in which they are but too apt to indulge security. The wise virgins, as well as the foolish, were defective in vigilance. But, whatever be the works of darkness with which we are encompassed, we should "cast them off," with a determination never more to sleep upon the post of danger.

In opposition to these, we are required to clothe ourselves with righteousness, which, as "light," is heaven-born, and approves its own excellence to all who behold it. This, as "armour" to the soul, protects it from the fiery darts of Satan, and aids it in all its conquests. In this we are to be ever clad, that we may be ready for the battle, and not have to look for our armour, when the enemy is at the door[b]. Thus only shall we be "good soldiers of Jesus Christ;" but thus armed, we shall be "more than conquerors through him that loved us."

Now the urgency of this duty appears strongly as it is connected with the foregoing assertion. For what is the work we have to do? it is no less than "putting off the works of darkness, and putting on the armour of light;" a work which none can perform, except he be strengthened by almighty

[b] Eph. vi. 13.

power. Besides, much of the time allotted for the performing of it, is spent already; and that which remains *must* be short, and *may be* terminated in an hour. Is it not "high time then that we should awake out of sleep[c]?" Should we not begin without an hour's delay, and "work with all our might?" Yes; let us all "gird on our armour, and fight the good fight of faith."]

APPLICATION—

[Have we *neglected our spiritual concerns?* What have we gained that can compensate for the loss of our precious time? And who is there amongst us that, if his day were now come, would not wish that he had watched and laboured for the good of his soul? Ah! remember that present things, however pleasing, will soon have passed away "as a dream when one awaketh," and nothing remain to you but the painful recollection, that you have lost the time which you should have improved for eternity.

Are we, on the contrary, *attending to our spiritual concerns?* Let us expect the present state to be a "night" of trial and affliction: but let us remember that the longest night has an end; and that "if sorrow endureth for a night, joy cometh in the morning."]

[c] ver. 11.

MDCCCCXIV.

PUTTING ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Rom. xiii. 14. *Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ; and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.*

IF too many reduce the whole of Christianity to a mere system of morals, it must be confessed, on the other hand, that there are not wanting many who almost exclude morals from the Christian code. That faith, provided it be pure and genuine, will have a sanctifying effect, is true: but it is not therefore true, that we should be satisfied with merely inculcating the necessity of faith, or encouraging its exercise. Its operations need to be strengthened by direct and vigorous calls to duty: and, if we imagine that there is any duty which we need not to enforce, or any iniquity against which we need not to guard the most exalted Christian, we greatly err. Our blessed Lord,

when surrounded by an immense multitude of people who pressed upon him for instruction, began his discourse with a solemn warning to his more immediate Disciples, to "beware of hypocrisy[a]." And on another occasion he said to them, "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness[b]." Such an exhortation, now addressed to a believer, would be deemed superfluous and legal: but experience too sadly proves, that such warnings are yet necessary in the Church of Christ: and, if the teachers of religion, from an idea of taking a sublimer course, omit to warn their people against intemperance, impurity, or any other sin, they must consider themselves as accountable to God for those enormities in the Church, which they have neglected to hold up to public reprobation. If it be thought that this, though suited to the infant state of the Church, was needless when Christianity was more fully revealed, and more completely established; what, I would ask, shall we say to that address of St. Paul to the Colossian Church? "Mortify your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:" and again, "Lie not one to another[c]." If, indeed no such things as these ever occurred amongst the professors of Christianity, we might, in our addresses to them at least, wave all notice of them: but, as this is not the case, we must still say to all without exception, "Let us walk honestly, as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying:" and, as the only sure preventive of such excesses, we must add, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof."

In these words we have a most important admonition conveyed,

I. In a way of plain direction—

Some have understood the Apostle's expression as

[a] Luke xii. 1. [b] Luke xxi. 34. [c] Col. iii. 5, 9.

inculcating faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; whose righteousness we ought to put on daily, as that robe wherein alone a sinner can stand in the presence of his God. But, though this is our duty, yet it is not the duty that is here inculcated. The meaning of the Apostle is, that we should put on the *graces* of the Lord Jesus Christ, so as in all respects to attain his character, and resemble him. His words are of the same import with what he elsewhere says, "Put off the old man with his deeds; and put on the new man[d]."

Put ye on then, beloved,

1. His humility and self-denial—

[In these respects he is particularly proposed as an example to us: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, and thinking it not robbery to be equal with God, yet made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant[e]." Having assumed our nature, he submitted to all the privations of which our nature is capable; being more destitute than even the beasts of the field or the fowls of the air, and "not having so much as a place where he might lay his head[f]." When the people would have taken him to make him a king, he withdrew himself from them; and chose rather the office of the meanest servant; condescending even to gird himself with a towel, and to wash his Disciples' feet[g]. And this he did on purpose to shew us, that no office of love, however humiliating or self-denying, should be neglected by us[h].

Let us, then, address ourselves to our duty in this respect. Let us abound in every possible exercise of love; accounting nothing too great either to do or suffer, if by any means we may promote the welfare of man, and the honour of our God———]

2. His meekness and patience—

St. Paul, exhorting the Corinthians to an obediential respect for him, says, "I beseech you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ[i]." And St. Peter informs us, that, in all that our blessed Lord endured, "he suffered for us; leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not;

[d] Col. iii. 9, 10. [e] Phil. ii. 5—8. [f] Matt. viii. 20
[g] John xiii. 4, 5. [h] John xiii. 14, 15. [i] 2 Cor. x. 1.

but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously[k]." Beloved brethren, set the Lord Jesus Christ before you in these respects. See what lamentable evils prevail, both in the Church and in the world, through the want of these heavenly dispositions. Verily, the different Churches of Christendom, yea, and almost every individual Church in Christendom, present us rather with one continued scene of "strife and envying," whereby infidels are hardened in their prejudices against the Gospel, and the very name of God is blasphemed in the world. Surely the contentions of Christians are a scandal to Christianity itself. "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: *even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye*[l]."]

3. His entire devotedness to the service of his God—

["His ear was bored;" and from his engagement he never receded, no, not for a moment. It was at all times "his meat and his drink to do the will of Him that sent him[m];" and never did he relax his exertions, till he could say, "It is finished." Thus let your hearts "be steadfast, immoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord:" and never cease to prosecute your heavenly calling, till you can say, with him, "Father, I have glorified thee on earth; I have finished the work which thou hast given me to do[n]." Account nothing done, whilst any thing remains to be done: but "forget what is behind, and reach forward to that which is before; and press on for the prize of your high calling[o]," till you are acknowledged by God himself as having gained the victory, and are called to sit down with your victorious Lord upon his throne of glory[p].]

The Apostle yet further urges his admonition,

II. In a way of salutary caution—

We must guard against every thing which may impede our progress—

[Every man has some "besetting sin," which he ought most carefully to put away[q]. He should mark what his constitutional or acquired propensities are, and exert himself to the uttermost to mortify and subdue them. Instead of providing for the gratification of them, he should abstain from

[k] 1 Pet. ii. 21—23. [l] Col. iii. 12, 13. [m] John iv. 34.
[n] John xvii. 4. [o] Phil. iii. 13, 14. [p] Rev. iii. 21.
[q] Heb. xii. 1.

every thing which tends to foster his corruption, or to give scope for its exercise. When the priests went into the tabernacle of the congregation to minister before the Lord, they were to "drink no wine nor strong drink," lest they should be in any respect unfitted for the holy service in which they were engaged[r]. In like manner, we, who are "a holy priesthood," should abstain even from lawful things, if by an unrestrained indulgence we are likely to be ensnared. Our blessed Lord has taught us to "watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation:" and this he has done, because in an hour of temptation it is so difficult to stand. We should be on our guard, not only against evil itself, but against the means and occasions of evil: the places and the company that are ensnaring to our souls, we should avoid; as Solomon has well admonished us: "Enter not into the path of the wicked; and go not in the path of evil men: avoid it; pass not by it; turn from it, and pass away[s]." Joseph found his safety in flight[t]: and we, in like manner, must "keep our heart with all diligence[u];" and "make a covenant with all our senses[x]," which may by any means prove inlets to temptation, and instruments for our destruction.]

It is in this way only that we can hope to be kept from the foulest sins—

[What is said of contention, may be said of sin in general, that "the beginnings of it are like the letting out of water." In the first instance, the danger seems small: but soon the breach is widened, and defies all the efforts that may be made to stop it. Of this we have an awful instance in David, who little thought, when first his eye glanced upon Bathsheba, what evils would ensue. The Apostle's primary object in our text was, to guard the Church against gross enormous evils. But how does he teach us to avoid them? He bids us to *aspire after the highest possible attainments*, even the "putting on of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and to be on our *guard against the very smallest occasions of sin*, and in no respect to make provision for the indulgence of it. And these two things must occupy our attention from day to day. O! "let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall:" and let him "keep under his body, and bring it into subjection, lest by any means, after having preached to others, he himself should be a cast-away[y]. If, for the obtaining of a prize in earthly contests, a long habit of laborious and self-denying discipline is necessary, much more is it in order to the ensuring of final success in our heavenly conflicts. To all, then, would I say,

[r] Lev. x. 8—10. [s] Prov. iv. 14, 15. [t] Gen. xxxix. 12.
[u] Prov. iv. 23. [x] Job xxxi. 1. [y] 1 Cor. ix. 27.

If you would not fall and perish by your indwelling corruptions, you must "crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts[z]," and must "perfect holiness in the fear of God[a]."]

ADDRESS—

1. Those who are satisfied with their attainments—

[What! Have you, then, attained the perfection that was in Christ? Are you so "clothed with humility," and all other graces, that the world may see in you the very image of Christ? Are you such "lights in a dark world," that all who behold you may "know how they are to walk and to please God?" Never be satisfied with any thing short of this: but press forward to your dying hour, that you may, through the mighty working of the power of God upon your souls, "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God[b]."]

2. Those who are striving after a more perfect conformity to their Lord and Saviour—

[It is well that you are endeavouring to "walk even as Christ walked[c]." But attempt it not in your own strength. You must be "strengthened with all might in your inward man, by the Spirit of the living God." To your latest hour, as well as in the commencement of the Divine life, "your sufficiency must be of God" alone. But "He is able to make all grace abound towards you, that you, having always all-sufficiency in all things, may abound unto every good work." And "faithful is He that hath called you, who also will do it."

"Now, to Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen".]

[z] Gal. v. 24. [a] 2 Cor. vii. 1.
[b] Col. iv. 12. [c] 1 John ii. 6.

MDCCCCXV.

THE EXTENT AND GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN OBEDIENCE.

Rom. xiv. 7—9. *None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.*

TO exercise Christian forbearance is no small attainment. There is continual need of it in the Christian

world: there are many things of an indifferent nature, which we are at liberty either to do or forbear; but all do not see their Christian liberty with equal clearness: hence the weak are apt to judge the strong, and the strong to despise the weak. Thus the Jews and Gentiles at Rome disputed respecting the use of certain meats, and the observance of certain days. The Apostle shews, that, though the two parties differed in their conduct, they were equally accepted of God. He grounds his assertion on the idea that both of them acted from a conscientious desire to please and honour God.

I. The extent of Christian obedience—

If we were to judge from the practice of mankind, we should think that very little was required of us; but we must judge by the unerring standard of God's word. Both the Law and the Gospel require the obedience of the heart, and in this the Christian labours to approve himself to God—

1. He renounces self—

[Self is the idol of the unregenerate world; they study only to please and exalt self in every part of their *life*; they have no higher view in courting or shunning *death*. But the Christian sees the sinfulness of thus idolizing self. He therefore endeavours to suppress its workings, and mortify its desires; he determines never to make the indulgence of self his chief aim.]

2. He devotes himself to the Lord—

[He studies to do his will, and gain his approbation: he seeks to glorify his name in every action of life: he considers that he is the Lord's property, both by creation and redemption: he strives therefore to honour him with every faculty of body and soul.]

This is not a mere theory, but a living picture of Christianity—

[The Apostle lays down an universal rule to this effect[a]: he himself conformed to it in an eminent degree[b]: every true Christian, according to his measure, conforms to it; "*none* of us," &c.]

Such obedience, however, will not spring from any but evangelical principles—

[a] 1 Cor. x. 31. [b] Phil. i. 20.

II. The grounds of it—

All possible obedience is due from us to God by creation; but God has acquired a new right over us by redemption.

Christ has died, risen, and revived—

[He died to make atonement for our guilt: he rose for our justification before God: he revived, and lives to carry on the work.]

He has done this with an express view to reduce us to allegiance—

[He undertook to save men *from* their sins, and not *in* them. Paul repeatedly declares this to have been the end of our Lord's *death*[c]; Peter speaks to the same effect[d], and our Lord himself also confirms this truth[e]. The same was also the end of his *resurrection* and *ascension*[f]; and in all that he is now doing, he keeps the same object in view.]

What he has done is therefore the proper ground of our obedience—

[We are still as much as ever bound by the laws of our creation; but we should be particularly affected with redeeming love: this should stir us up to the most unreserved obedience. The Apostle requires such obedience, on this very ground[g]. We shall surely render it, if we have any interest in redemption[h].]

INFER—

1. How few real Christians are there in the world!—

[If living to ourselves were Christianity, there would be Christians without number: but nothing less than an entire devotedness to God can entitle us to the name. How few then are there to be found! The text might be reversed in almost every assembly of professing Christians[i]. Let us judge ourselves by this criterion: let us rest in no partial or hypocritical services: let us cry to God for his Spirit to renew us in our inward man.]

2. How reasonable is the Christian life!—

[Christian obedience is often ridiculed as preciseness, and needless scrupulosity: it is deemed a mark of a weak and enthusiastic mind. But it is justly called a reasonable service[k]. Who can ever estimate the obligation arising from the death of Christ? Who can sufficiently praise him for what

[c] 2 Cor. v. 15. Tit. ii. 14. [d] 1 Pet. ii. 24.
[e] John xvii. 19. [f] Phil. ii. 9—11. [g] 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.
[h] 2 Cor. v. 14. [i] Phil. ii. 21. [k] Rom. xii. 1.

ne is now doing for us in heaven? Is it reasonable that we should defeat the ends of all his love? Ought we not rather to requite it to the utmost of our power? Should we account any thing too much to do for him? Let all then confess the reasonableness of being devoted to Christ. Let every Christian exert himself more and more, disregarding ridicule and contempt[1].]

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 58.

MDCCCCXVI.

THE FUTURE JUDGMENT.

Rom. xiv. 10—12. *We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*

THERE is in the morality of the Gospel a sublimity of which even the godly themselves have a very indistinct perception. We are apt to lay down broad principles of action, without taking into consideration other principles which should influence us in the application of them. For instance; where the calls of duty seem to interfere with each other, we are apt to lean to one side or the other with an exclusive preference, instead of studying how the two may be made to harmonize, in just order and mutual subordination. To most persons it would appear an unquestionable truth, that if one thing be right, its opposite must be wrong; whereas, if an action be in itself indifferent, the doing or forbearing of it may be equally right, and equally acceptable to God. This was the case with regard to the eating of meats forbidden by the Jewish law, and the observance of particular days which had been held sacred under the Mosaic dispensation. There was nothing morally good or evil in these enactments: they depended on the will of Him who had imposed them: and, when they were abrogated, they remained as purely matters of indifference, as if nothing had ever been enjoined respecting them. But the contending parties in the

Church at Rome could not see this: those who had been educated in Jewish habits, not only maintained their own forms, but judged and condemned the Gentiles who rejected them: those, on the contrary, who knew that those ordinances were abrogated by the Christian dispensation, not only asserted their own liberty, but held in contempt the persons who were yet in bondage to their forms. Now, both of these parties acted right in complying with the dictates of their own conscience; but wrong, in presuming to sit in judgment upon each other. To mark the true line of duty in this matter, was the Apostle's object in this part of his epistle. He shews, that, provided a man endeavoured in such matters to approve himself to God, doing only what he really judged to be right, God accepted him; and that, whilst we commend ourselves to the judgment of our God, we should also leave to his judgment those who differ from us; assured, that in the last day he will dispense to all, not according to our narrow views, but according to what he knew to be the real disposition of their minds.

Leaving, for the present, the primary subject of the chapter, namely, candour in judging one another, I shall draw your attention to that which is here incidentally introduced; namely, the certainty and awfulness of the future judgment.

I. Its certainty—

There shall be a day of future retribution—

[Reason itself might tell us this: for how else are the inequalities of the present state of things ever to be rectified? At present, "all things come alike to all;" or rather, the ungodly triumph, and the godly are oppressed. But can we suppose, that God will never recompense to his servants the troubles they sustain for his sake, or to their enemies the injuries they inflict? No: there shall be a time when God will deal with men in a way of perfect equity; and he has fixed a day for "the revelation of his righteous judgment." To this the Scriptures bear ample testimony. They even declare, with great precision, the very mode in which the judgment shall be administered. They declare that Jesus Christ shall be the Judge; (for "the Father hath committed all

judgment to the Son[a]:") that, at a period fixed in the Divine counsels, "he will come in his own glory, and in the glory of his Father, with myriads of his holy angels," and will sit upon the throne of his glory; and that "before him shall be gathered all nations[b]:" that "the books," in which the transactions of the whole human race are recorded, "shall be opened," and "every one be judged according to his works[c]:" that, for this end, "all who were in their graves shall come forth" in their own proper bodies; "some to a resurrection of life, others to a resurrection of damnation[d]."]

Of this God has assured us, with a most solemn oath—

[The Apostle quotes a passage from the prophecies of Isaiah. This passage speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Apostle tells us, and as the whole context in the prophet clearly shews. The person spoken of in that passage is He to whom we are to "look for salvation;" He "in whom alone a sinner can have either righteousness or strength;" and "in whom all the seed of Israel must be justified, and shall glory[e]." To HIM shall all submit, either voluntarily in this present life, or involuntarily at that great and awful day. His dominion shall extend over all. But many resist it now: and therefore there must be a day when they shall be able to resist it no longer; and when those who would not bow to the sceptre of his grace "shall be broken in pieces by him, as a potter's vessel, with a rod of iron[f]." This has God declared with an oath. And here I cannot but notice how clearly and indisputably this passage declares the Godhead of Christ. Again and again does the prophet proclaim the proper Deity of the person of whom he is speaking:—"Look unto ME, and be ye saved! for I am GOD; and *there is none else*. I have *sworn by myself*, the word is gone forth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto ME every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely shall one say, In THE LORD (Jehovah) have I righteousness and strength; unto HIM shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In THE LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." Let these expressions be compared with the application made of them in my text, and it is impossible to avoid the conclusion, that Christ is God; and no subordinate kind of Deity, but "God over all, blessed for evermore." Hear then Almighty God *pledging his own life* and immortal perfections, that such a day shall arrive, and that such shall be the issue of it; every creature that has ever existed being summoned before the

[a] John v. 22. [b] Matt. xxv. 31, 32. [c] Rev. xx. 11—15.
[d] John v. 28, 29. [e] Isai. xlv. 22—25. [f] Rev. ii. 27.

Lord Jesus; and being constrained, whether willing or not, to acknowledge Christ as his rightful Lord, and as the only Saviour of the world.]

Such is the *certainty* of that day. Let us next consider,

II. Its awfulness—

In that day, "every one of us shall give account of himself to God." Not one shall be absent; not one be able to resist, or elude, the summons. The most formidable monarchs will then be on a footing with the meanest beggar: and every one shall, not merely *be reminded of* the things which he has done, but shall *confess* them, and "give an account of" them,

1. Generally, as to his demeanour on the whole—

[Then shall we give an account of our *time*. It ought to have been dedicated altogether to the Lord, and not consumed in sloth or vanity. The use we have made of it will form a subject of most serious inquiry: not a day or an hour passes, but it shall be then reviewed. Our *talents*, too, our property, our station, our intellectual powers, our influence of every kind, must then be accounted for. They were the Lord's; and ought neither to have been wasted, nor hid in a napkin, but to have been augmented by a diligent application of them. And what shall I say of our *advantages*, particularly the unspeakable advantage of a preached Gospel? Must not those also be accounted for? Yes, verily, they are most signally noted by Almighty God, and will form a very important ground of approbation or displeasure, according as they have been neglected or improved. Our *habits* altogether will then come under the strictest scrutiny; whether we have abounded in the exercises of prayer and praise; or whether we have passed over in a formal way the duties of the closet, finding no delight in communion with God: whether we have put away all our besetting sins; or have "retained iniquity in our hearts" unmortified and unsubdued. Every thing, even every idle word, will come under review, to receive its appropriate reward[g]: nor shall so much as a secret thought escape the sentence of our God[h]; for "he will bring every secret thing into judgment, and make manifest the counsels of the heart[i]," as subjects of praise or dispraise, according to their intrinsic quality.]

2. Particularly, as to his conduct towards the Lord Jesus Christ—

[g] Matt. xii. 36. [h] Eccl. xii. 14. [i] 1 Cor. iv. 5.

[It will be remembered, that the passage cited by the Apostle refers, in the first instance, to the dominion of Christ, which shall be established over every child of man: but, forasmuch as that is not accomplished now, it shall be accomplished hereafter, when all "his enemies shall become his footstool." Hence the Apostle justly quotes them, as declarative of a future judgment: and hence we conclude that our submission to him will be a subject of special inquiry. Then shall it be clearly seen whether we have "looked unto Christ for salvation;" whether we have sought "in him our righteousness and strength;" and whether we have "gloried in him" as "all our salvation and all our desire." These things are disregarded by us now, as of small moment; and we make little account of any thing, except of our conduct towards our fellow-men. But we may be perfectly assured that our conduct towards the Lord Jesus Christ will not be found a point of secondary importance then. It is not so light a matter to "trample under foot the Son of God, and to do despite to the Spirit of his grace," that it should be overlooked in that day. Let me therefore most affectionately remind you all, that every one of us, without one single exception, shall give account of himself to God, and especially respecting his treatment of the Saviour, whom to disregard is death, and "whom to know is life eternal."]

St. Paul, speaking of the day of judgment, says, "Knowing, therefore, the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men." Permit me then to IMPROVE the subject, and to persuade you,

1. In reference to the main subject of the context—

[We have before observed, that the Apostle is speaking respecting candour in judging; and, of moral subjects, there is scarcely any that is of greater importance than that. Our blessed Lord enjoins us strictly in relation to it: "Judge not, that ye be not judged; for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again[k]." Think for yourselves, and act for yourselves; and regard not the uncharitable judgment of others, when you are "fully persuaded in your own mind." But concede to others the liberty which you claim for yourselves. Leave others to exercise their own discretion: and, instead of sitting in judgment upon them, leave them to the infallible judgment of their God. Believe that they may be right, as well as you; and that they may be right, though they differ from you. You yourselves, as well as those whom you judge, will shortly appear before the judgment-seat of Christ:

[k] Matt. vii. 1, 2.

there will every man receive according to his works. On the side of charity you may safely err: but if you indulge uncharitableness towards others, you can expect nothing but what God has expressly declared; that they "who have shewed no mercy shall themselves have judgment without mercy[1]."]

2. In reference to the passage we have been insisting on—

[You have seen that Christ will surely triumph at the last. Respecting those who pertinaciously reject him, he will say, "Bring hither those mine enemies who would not that I should reign over them, and slay them before me." Lay down, then, the weapons of your rebellion, and humble yourselves before him. Think not that he will forget his oath: for he will surely fulfil it. He is able so to do; and he "will not repent" of any word that he hath spoken. "Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Has he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Seek then, without delay, to have his whole work accomplished in you; and be assured, that, if you serve him faithfully, according to his word, the time is not far distant when he will address you from his throne of glory, "Well done, good and faithful servants; enter ye into the joy of your Lord."]

[1] Jam. ii. 13.

MDCCCCXVII.

PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY ILLUSTRATED.

Rom. xiv. 17—19. *The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.*

TO have a clear view of Christian doctrines is necessary; but to have a just apprehension of the Christian spirit and temper is no less necessary: and it is much to be regretted, that where the doctrines are well understood, the Christian temper is often grievously overlooked: nay, the very importance of the doctrines is often made a pretext for exercising tempers most repugnant to vital Christianity. People are not willing to distinguish between the essentials,

and the non-essentials, of religion. There is in every man a disposition to exalt some favourite sentiment of his own, and to press it upon others beyond what its relative importance requires; whereas the spirit of Christianity calls rather for mutual forbearance in relation to things indifferent, and mutual concessions, in order to the preservation of peace and harmony.

The scope of the chapter before us is to mark out a line of conduct for Christians in relation to this matter: and in this view it deserves the most attentive consideration. To present the subject before you in all its most important bearings, we shall,

I. Shew wherein practical Christianity consists—

[The Jewish religion consisted much in the observance of rites and ceremonies, which were marked with great precision, and enjoined under the severest penalties. The forbearing the use of certain kinds of food, the keeping as sacred certain times and seasons, and the complying with certain ordinances, were commanded with all the same authority as the decalogue itself. But those things were to cease with that dispensation[a]: they were appointed only "till the times of reformation:" and now they are to be observed no longer[b]. "The kingdom of God," that is, the kingdom of Christ established in the heart, does not consist in them; "it is not in meat and drink," but in something more substantial, more excellent, more spiritual; namely, "in righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

Many interpret these words as importing faith in the "righteousness" of the Lord Jesus Christ, and "peace" through the blood of his cross, and "joy in the Holy Ghost" as the fruit of our acceptance with God. But we apprehend that these words relate rather to *holy and heavenly dispositions*, as contrasted with the spirit that is generated by an undue attachment to rites and ceremonies. We understand by them *an universal love of righteousness*, as opposed to a zeal for forms; *a peaceful state of mind*, as opposed to the irritation that is cherished, and the dissensions that are occasioned, by a contentious spirit; and *a joy in God*, as opposed to the self-complacency which is fostered by a self-righteous compliance with prescribed forms. The scope of the whole context seems to point to this interpretation, and to direct our thoughts into the channel marked out for us by the words of Balaam to Balak[c]; or by those of our Lord to the self-righteous

[a] Heb. ix. 10. [b] Col. ii. 16—22. [c] Mic vi. 6—8.

Pharisees, "who paid tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, but neglected the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith[d]."

In these things vital Christianity consists. The turning of the whole heart to the observance of God's laws, is the great promise of the Gospel, and the certain effect of it, wherever it is received in truth: "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments to do them[e]." And again, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts[f]"——— Nor is a peaceful disposition less certainly imparted by the Gospel: for love is the necessary fruit of faith[g], and forms the most striking feature in the character of every true believer[h]——— Joy also in the Holy Ghost will invariably accompany these holy dispositions: for the Holy Ghost delights to dwell where God is honoured, and man is loved for God's sake. In the hearts of such believers "he will glorify the Lord Jesus, and will shed abroad the Father's love: he will fill them with joy unspeakable and glorified"——— Such righteousness, such peace, and such joy, are the fruits and evidences of the reign of Christ in the soul: and in them, rather than in forms of any kind, does his kingdom consist.]

Having thus marked the nature of practical Christianity, we shall,

II. Point out its peculiar excellence—

The ordinances relative to meats and drinks were mere "beggarly elements:" they had no value at all, except as "shadows of good things to come." But these holy dispositions are truly valuable: and every man who cultivates them,

1. Is accepted of God—

[The observers of forms and ceremonies were not at all accepted, unless their services were accompanied with a suitable and corresponding frame of mind[i]; yea rather, they were hateful, even as the offering of swine's blood, or as murder itself[k]. But not so the services of which we have been speaking: they are truly pleasing in the sight of God; and the dispositions exercised are in his sight "an ornament of great price." Yes, "the righteous Lord loveth righteousness," and "will meet him who rejoiceth in working it[l]." There is no

[d] Matt. xxiii. 23. [e] Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. [f] Jer. xxxi. 33.
[g] Gal. v. 6. [h] 1 John iii. 14. [i] Isai. i. 11—14.
[k] Isai. lxvi. 3. [l] Isai. lxiv. 5.

token of his love which he will not vouchsafe to those who cultivate a loving spirit, and seek all their happiness in him. "He will set his love upon them; and will hear and answer all their petitions: he will be with them in trouble: he will deliver them and honour them: with long life also will he satisfy them, and will shew them his full and complete salvation[m]."]

2. Is approved of men—

[Those who spend their zeal on the externals of religion may be commended by partisans, but they will never be respected by those who differ from them, nor indeed by their own party. The dispositions exercised by such persons are unamiable, and therefore they can never generate love in the breasts of any. But the holy man of God, who labours to fulfil all righteousness, and to promote the happiness of all around him, and to live in the constant enjoyment of his God, he, I say, has a testimony in the breasts of all, even of those who differ from him in things of less importance: and though from circumstances they may keep at a distance from him, they honour him in their hearts, and have an inward persuasion "that God is with him of a truth." The ungodly world indeed may hate him, just as they hated the Apostles and our Lord himself: but yet even they will feel an awe in his presence, and, at the very time that they revile and persecute him, have oftentimes the secret thought in their hearts, "If I were dying, I should be glad to be found in your state."]

We must not however overlook that which gives to these services their chief excellence—

[It is supposed that the person who performs these services is already Christ's subject, and servant, having through Divine grace been converted to God, and "translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son:" and that, in performing them, he is not attempting to establish a righteousness of his own, but to "serve and glorify the Lord Jesus Christ." It is necessary that he keep this end in view; and that all that he does be done *for Christ*, that is, from a regard to his authority, and with a view to his glory. Indeed faith in Christ, and love to his name, are the only principles that will operate to the production of the dispositions before mentioned. A man may have the semblance of them without faith in Christ; but the reality he cannot have. In the mind of the unbeliever, the circumstantials of religion will have an undue weight: in the believer only will the essentials have their full scope and paramount ascendency.

[m] Ps. xci. 14—16.

When therefore we speak of these dispositions as accepted of God and approved of men, it is supposed that in them "we serve Christ," by whose grace alone we can do them, and through whom alone they can ever be accepted.]

Having now shewn the nature and excellence of practical Christianity, we shall, in conclusion,

III. Give some directions for the exercise of it—

The general direction in our text is, to "follow after the things that make for peace, and things whereby one may edify another." But that the whole scope of the chapter may be brought more fully into view, we will descend somewhat more to particulars.

1. Lay not an undue stress on things indifferent—

[As amongst the Jews there were many who laid more stress on the washing of pots and cups than on obedience to God's commandments[n], so now there are many whose zeal has respect to little else than the circumstantials of religion. The Papists are ready to confine salvation to those who are within the pale of their Church: and almost every distinct sect of Protestants is ready to arrogate to itself the same exclusive privilege. It is grievous to think what mutual aversion has been created among Christians, by the circumstance of worshipping with, or without, a form of prayer, or by differences still less important. But things ought not so to be. We should lay no more stress on any thing than we find laid on it in the Scriptures of truth. The fundamental doctrines of religion must be held fast, and sacrificed to none. The plain duties also of religion must be executed with a firmness that is immoveable: but whatever interferes not with these, should be left to the judgment and the conscience of every individual; neither being imposed on him as of necessity, nor exacted of him with rigour, nor made a ground of alienation from him. We should concede to others the liberty we claim for ourselves; and be more anxious to preserve an union of heart, than by dictation to produce an uniformity of sentiment. "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike." And what says St. Paul to this? Let the more powerful of the two compel the other to adopt his views? No: but, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind[o]."]

2. Be tender in judging those who differ from you—

[n] Mark vii. 8, 9. [o] ver. 5.

[Those who saw their Christian liberty, despised their weaker brethren, for scrupling to eat what had been offered to an idol; whilst, on the other hand, they who doubted the lawfulness of eating such things, condemned their stronger brethren, as presumptuously disregarding the commands of God. A similar disposition to despise or condemn each other exists among the advocates for certain doctrines which have for ages divided the Church of God. Those who think they have a deeper insight into the Divine decrees, look down with pity and contempt on their less enlightened brethren; whilst these, on the other hand, feel embittered against the others, and load them with all manner of obloquy. Alas! alas! when shall the professed members of Christ's body cease to exercise such dispositions towards each other, and agree to cultivate a spirit of mutual forbearance? When shall men cease to dogmatize, as if they were infallible? The probability is, that the truth lies not exclusively with either of these parties, but is found rather with those who receive with meekness, and interpret with diffidence, the apparently opposite declarations of God, and wait his time for the fuller explication of them. No man is in the exclusive possession of all truth; nay, persons may in some things pursue an opposite conduct, and yet both be right, because the things wherein they disagree may be matters of pure indifference[p]: therefore, whilst every man should seek to acquire the most correct sentiments, every man should leave others to "stand or fall to their own master[q]."]

3. Be cautious in the exercise of your liberty—

[An action may be good in itself, yet it may become bad by being done in the presence of another who doubts its lawfulness, and may by means of it be induced to violate the dictates of his own conscience in following the example. This is a point well worthy of our attention. We should have respect to the consciences of others, and be careful "not to lay a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in our brother's way." As we should not presume to force him to act contrary to his conscience, so neither should we tempt him to do so, lest we lead him into sin, and thereby destroy his soul. Our blessed Lord laid down his life to save such persons; and shall we not forego a trifling gratification for their welfare? Yea, shall we, for the sake of some small indulgence, risk the plunging them into everlasting ruin? Shocking impiety! In so acting, we sin against Christ, and greatly endanger the salvation of our own souls. And rather than be guilty of such wickedness, we should deny ourselves the most innocent gratification in the world: "If meat make our brother to offend, we should eat

[p] ver. 6. [q] ver. 4.

no flesh while the world standeth, lest we make our brother to offend[r]."]

4. Be anxious, not to proselyte to a party, but to edify your brother in love—

[Here almost all classes of the Christian world are greatly to blame. If a brother begin to have his conscience awakened, the first object of the generality is to bring him over to their own particular party. For this end they set before him those particular points which may lead his mind into the particular channel which they wish. But St. Paul expressly forbids such hateful conduct: "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but *not to doubtful* disputations[s]." How many hopeful blossoms have come to nought in consequence of their being thus blighted by the breath of vain dispute! How many, instead of coming fully to Christ, and devoting themselves entirely to him, have been led to rest in the adoption of some particular creed, an union with some particular party, or a submission to one particular rite! Verily, they who, by such an use of their influence, keep back an inquiring soul, have much to answer for. To build up a brother in faith and love should be our only object; and, whether he belong to our particular party or not, it should satisfy us to see that he "grows in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Instead of labouring to proselyte him to our party, we should forget that we ourselves are of any party[t]: or, if of a party we must be, let it be of that which Moses approved, and which comprehends the universal Church,—"the Lord's side[u]." To unite each other unto him, and build up each other in his faith and fear, is the only proper exercise of Christian love, and Christian influence.]

[r] ver. 21. with 1 Cor. viii. 9—13.
[s] ver. 1.
[t] 1 Cor. ix. 9—22.
[u] Exod. xxxii. 26.

MDCCCCXVIII.

REGARD TO CONSCIENCE RECOMMENDED.

Rom. xiv. 22. *Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.*

IT is well known that there is a great diversity of opinion amongst good men respecting the principles of religion. Nor are they altogether agreed upon the subject of moral duty. Some have a clearer insight into the nature and extent of Christian liberty, whilst

others are in bondage to superstitious rites; and some are ready to plead for a degree of latitudinarian indulgence, which others feel themselves by no means authorized to admit. There is, however, one point in which all are agreed; and that is, the necessity of following the dictates of our own conscience. The man who violates his own principles, whether he be right or wrong in his judgment, stands condemned in his own mind: whilst, on the other hand, as the Apostle tells us in our text, "he is happy, who condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth."

The subject of conscience needs to be treated with extreme delicacy and care; lest we wound a weak brother, and make the heart of the righteous sad." It is however a subject of such vital importance, that we must of necessity enter upon it, and prosecute it, with all fidelity. Let me, then, state to you,

I. The office of conscience—

The proper office of conscience is admonition. It is not given to instruct us in any thing new, but to regulate us according to some fixed principles in the mind. It is given us,

1. As a secret monitor—

[In every man there is something which has within him the force of a law. Those who possess not the knowledge of God's revealed will have yet some principles of action, which they regard as binding, and in accordance with which the voice of conscience speaks. Having no other law, "they are a law unto themselves[a]:" and the office of conscience is, to testify, when they fulfil, and when they violate, this law. Nor does this testimony refer to their actions merely, but to their motives also: respecting which, none but themselves can form any correct judgment. This is the view which the Scripture gives of conscience: "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly[b]." Not that it waits for the execution of an act: it testifies beforehand respecting the quality of the act proposed; and operates as a stimulus, if the act be good; or as a check, if it be evil. Its influence indeed is, for the most part, proportioned to the desire which a man feels to be governed by it: if a man disregard its motions, it may be reduced to utter silence: but if

[a] Rom. ii. 14. [b] Prov. xx. 27.

he desire to act agreeably to its dictates, it will be a most kind and faithful monitor on all occasions. It will say to us what no fellow-creature could venture to say; and it will take the same freedom in the bosom of a king as in the meanest of his subjects. It is rarely very clamorous, except after some enormous transgression: its testimony is, for the most part, delivered in a still small voice, which none but the person himself can hear. Yet, on some occasions, it will betray its operation in the mind, especially when it reproves for something amiss, and for something which the man himself would be ashamed to have known: it will then suffuse his cheek with a blush, or perhaps cast over his countenance a pallid hue, which a wise observer cannot easily misinterpret.]

2. As an authoritative judge—

[But it is not as a monitor only that conscience acts, but as a judge also: and in this respect it is God's vicegerent in the soul. It erects a tribunal there; and summons a man to appear before it, and to give an account of his conduct: and then it passes judgment, "either excusing or accusing him[c]," as the occasion warrants; and acquitting or condemning him, as God himself will do at the future judgment. Sometimes it exercises its authority immediately; as when it declared to Adam, in Paradise, that he was despoiled of the divine image in which he had been created[d]: or, as when it caused David's heart to smite him for numbering the people[e]: or, as when it caused the acccusers of an adulteress to go out from the presence of our Lord[f]. At other times, it delays till some occasion arise to draw forth its judgment: thus it did in the case of Joseph's brethren, whom it made to feel the injustice and the cruelty which, some years before, they had exercised towards him[g]. Sometimes it delivers its sentence in a way to produce becoming humiliation, as in the case of Peter: and sometimes in a way to drive to utter despondency, as in the case of Judas; whom it impelled to suicide, as the only refuge from its poignant reproaches.]

Let us now contemplate

II. Our duty in reference to it—

Men have a duty towards their minds generally, to cultivate them and improve them in knowledge, and to fit them for the better discharge of all the functions of life. But towards their conscience they have obligations of the highest order, on account of

[c] Rom. ii. 15. [d] Gen. iii. 10. [e] 2 Sam. xxiv. 10.
[f] John viii. 9. [g] Gen. xlii. 21.

the pre-eminent authority with which it is invested, and the influence which it exercises over our whole man. We ought, then,

1. To get it well informed—

[We have before observed, that conscience prescribes no rule to us, but only gives its testimony according to a rule which has previously existed in the mind. Nor does any man ever commit sin by following its dictates. St. Paul, when he persecuted the saints, supposed that in so doing he was discharging a duty to God; for "he thought that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus." Doubtless in this he sinned: but his sin consisted, not in following the dictates of his own conscience, but in having his conscience so ill-informed. Had he studied the Scriptures with more humility of mind, and sought instruction from God, he would have been kept from the fatal errors into which he fell. Indeed, he himself assigns as an extenuation of his guilt, that he had contracted it "ignorantly, and in unbelief[h]:" for had he known what evil he was committing, and yet persisted in it, there was reason to fear he would never have obtained mercy at the Lord's hands. If we would have conscience perform its office aright, we must take the law of God for the standard whereby it shall judge. We must not go to men to instruct us in the principles of the world, which are altogether founded in error; but must look to God, to "guide us into all truth," according to his unerring word, and through the influences of his good Spirit. Nor must we hastily imagine that our views are correct: for there is a film upon our eyes, and we are far from seeing things so distinctly as we ought. We should maintain a godly jealousy over ourselves, lest "Satan beguile us," or our own heart deceive us. We should take care that "the light which is in us be not darkness:" for if it be, how great must that darkness be! But, "if our eye be single, then will our whole body be full of light[i]," and the testimony of conscience be in perfect accordance with the mind of God.]

2. To consult it on all occasions—

[We should not go on blindfold, but should endeavour to see our way clear before we enter upon any course of action. To act first, and afterwards make inquiries, is almost a certain way to involve ourselves in guilt[k]. To make conscience a pretext for doing a thing to which we are previously inclined, is indeed a horrible delusion; and not less common than it is hateful. But, on the other hand, to do any thing without a careful inquiry into the quality of the action

[h] 1 Tim. i. 13. [i] Matt. vi. 22, 23. [k] Prov. xx. 25.

proposed, is presumptuous in the extreme, and shews that we have not really the fear of God before our eyes. Nor is the testimony of conscience easily obtained. Sometimes, indeed, it speaks instantly, and without much previous consultation: and *in that case its testimony is almost always according to truth;* and *a man will do well in paying especial respect to such spontaneous motions of the monitor within him.* But, for the most part, it requires time to make a fair statement of the circumstances of which the conscience is to judge: and in such cases, if they have respect to God only, we should consider attentively the conduct of our blessed Lord and his Apostles on similar occasions: or, if they have respect to man, then should we in all cases change places, as it were, with the person concerned; that so we may judge with more candour than we are likely to exercise, if we stand altogether on our own ground; because our judgment is but too likely to be warped by self-love and sinful partiality. We should never forget, that, "if we doubt of the lawfulness of any thing, we are self-condemned if we do it; since whatsoever is not of faith, is sin[l]." We should pause therefore, and deliberate, till we see our way clear; and determine, if possible, not to do any thing till "we are fully persuaded in our own minds[m]."]

3. To keep it upright and tender—

[Conscience may easily be warped, yea, and silenced too; so that it shall give no testimony whatever, till it is awaked by some flagrant enormity, or by some peculiar occurrence. If we go and consult worldly advisers, they will of course justify the ways which they wish us to follow: and if we listen to the voice of interest or inclination within us, we may soon be furnished with reasons enough for prosecuting the line which they would prescribe. They will tell us, that the object for which they plead is commonly approved by all in our circumstances: that we need not give way, except on this or that particular occasion: that to hold out against the wishes and solicitations of our friends can be ascribed to nothing but spiritual pride, and will give just offence to those whom we are bound to please; and that, in fact, our preciseness will only offend those whom we ought rather to conciliate, and make religion hateful to those whose eternal welfare we wish rather to promote. A thousand arguments of this kind will be presented to our minds, either by our worldly friends, or by our own carnal hearts; and by them we may persuade conscience to alter its sentence, and to sanction our ways: and, after a time, we may so blind and sear our conscience, that it shall no longer perform its proper office. But to effect this, is to

[l] ver. 23. [m] ver. 5.

inflict an irreparable injury on our own souls, and to seal, I had almost said, our eternal condemnation. The utmost possible caution, therefore, should be used on this head. No standard should be referred to, but that which God himself will approve; and according to his written word should every sentiment and every act be tried. "Whoever speaks not according to this word, there is no light in him[n];" and his advice, if followed, will only cause our feet to stumble to our ruin. Taking that for our guide on all occasions, and under all circumstances, we should say with holy Job, "My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live[o]."]

ADDRESS—

1. Those who consult not their conscience, nor are troubled by it—

[Though there is no man without a conscience, yet the greater part of the world live as if they had no such faculty to controul them. Whatever be the life which they have chosen for themselves, they walk in it without much thought, or any remorse. The lovers of pleasure, the votaries of gain, the formal religionist, all conceive their respective lines to be, on the whole, such as they are at liberty to follow, and such as shall issue well in the end. As for trying themselves by the test of Scripture, they think not of it: they stand self-approved; and they conceive that God will confirm the testimony of their own minds. But I must remind all such persons, that there is a future judgment; and that God will judge, not by the laws which men establish for themselves, but by the law which he himself has given in his written word. By that shall the whole universe be judged, and according to that shall every man's eternal doom be fixed[p]———]

2. Those whose consciences are weak and troubled—

[If your minds be troubled, see whether there be not just occasion for them so to be: and when you have found out the accursed thing, put it away from you with abhorrence, and implore mercy at the hands of God for your sin in having ever indulged it. And if it be but a mote in the eye, let conscience never cease to weep, till it has wept it out. There are, it is true, circumstances which may well admit of doubt: and, under such circumstances, you will do well to consult some one of known piety and deep experience; and at the same time to seek direction from God, through the influence of his Holy Spirit. Whilst your doubts remain, it will be well to pause: for, "if a man esteem any thing unclean, to him it

[n] Isai. viii. 20. [o] Job xxvii. 6. [p] 1 Cor. iv. 4, 5.

is unclean[q]." Yet it is by no means advisable to rest without obtaining satisfaction to your mind. It is a painful state in which to be; and you should use all proper means to obtain deliverance from it[r]: but, till that deliverance come, take my text for your guide: "Happy is he who condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth." "If once you make sacrifice of a good conscience, you are in the way to make an utter shipwreck of your faith[s]."

Yet I must say, Do not judge those who see not with your eyes, and walk not in your path. Another person may have a fuller insight into the nature of Christian liberty than you: and "to his own Master must every man stand or fall." Be you contented with approving your own selves to God; and leave to others the latitude which you claim for yourselves[t].]

3. Those who enjoy the testimony of a good conscience—

[This is a most exalted privilege, and, whether in life[u] or death[x], a source of unutterable joy. Be thankful for it: and, at the same time, be washing your very best actions, no less than those which are more faulty, in the fountain of your Redeemer's blood: for, if He "bear not the iniquity of your holy things[y]," your most righteous acts will condemn you. Take care, at the same time, that your liberty be never so used as to become a stumbling-block to your weaker brethren. It were better to forbear any gratification whatever, than, by indulging yourselves in it, to make it an occasion of offence to any[z]. Let your whole conduct shew the excellence of the principles by which you are governed: and let it be "the one labour of your lives to maintain a good conscience both towards God and towards man[a]."]

[q] ver. 14. [r] Gal. vi. 4. [s] 1 Tim. i. 19.
[t] ver. 4, 5. [u] 2 Cor. i. 12. [x] 2 Kings xx. 3.
[y] Exod. xxviii. 38. [z] 1 Cor. viii. 9, 13. [a] Acts xxiv. 16.

MDCCCCXIX.

SELF-DENYING LOVE INCULCATED.

Rom. xv. 1—3. *We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee, fell on me.*

WHILST many scarcely ever dwell upon the atonement of Christ, and on that righteousness which

he has wrought out for the redemption of a ruined world, others insist on these, almost to the utter exclusion of all other topics. But the Apostle Paul, who certainly was inferior to none in his regard for that fundamental doctrine of the Gospel,—salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus, was yet delighted to exhibit his Divine Master as a pattern and example of universal holiness. In respect to love in particular, he constantly urges us "to love one another, as Christ loved us." In the words before us, he seems almost to go out of his way (if we may so speak) to introduce Christ to our notice in this view. He brings forward, as illustrative of it, a passage of Scripture, in which a person less conversant with the spiritual import of Scripture, or less alive to this important point, would scarcely have found any thing bearing upon his subject. Indeed he almost appears to apologize for this particular quotation, by observing, that "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning;" and that, consequently, this prophecy, even though it should not be thought to bear so directly and obviously upon his subject as some others, may properly be adduced in illustration of it. But this very circumstance tends so much the more to shew the importance of the subject in the precise view in which he has placed it. Let us consider then,

I. The example here propounded to us—

Two things are said of our blessed Lord,

1. He pleased not himself—

[And how true is this! View him in his incarnation: Was it to please himself that he left "the bosom of the Father," and divested himself of all "the glory that he had with the Father from all eternity?" Was it to please himself, that, "when he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant?" Was it to please himself that he was "made in the likeness of *sinful* flesh," partaking of all our infirmities, and being "made like unto us in all things, sin only excepted?" View him in *his life:* Was it to please himself that till the age of thirty he worked as a common carpenter: and that, from the time he took upon him

his ministerial office, he was subjected to evils and distresses of every kind; being from first to last "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," as his daily and hourly companion? So poor was he, that he had not a place where to lay his head: and so hated, that he was "a sign spoken against," a butt of contradiction to all the people of Israel. There was not any thing he either said or did, that did not subject him to fresh reproaches, and prove an occasion of offence to all around him. Incessantly was he represented as a deceiver, a blasphemer, and a devil, yea, as one who should not be suffered to live. His very first sermon would have been his last, if he had not miraculously withdrawn himself from his persecutors. Was all this undertaken and submitted to, to please himself? View him in *his death*. Was it to please himself that he consented to drink the cup of bitterness which his Father put into his hands; or that he was bathed in a bloody sweat in the garden of Gethsemane; or that he endured the hidings of his Father's face, and expired under all the shame and agonies of crucifixion? No: at no one moment of his life do we find him consulting his own pleasure: his only object, his very meat and drink, was to do the will of Him that sent him.]

2. He submitted to all manner of indignities purely for our sake—

[It had been foretold by David that he should do so. The passage cited by the Apostle undoubtedly refers to Christ. Whatever reference in a subordinate way it had to David, its main import is that affixed to it in our text[a]. Every one that was an enemy to God the Father, was an enemy to him: and every shaft directed against the Majesty of heaven, pierced his breast. Nor did he withdraw himself from this inconceivably distressing situation, till he had accomplished all that his sufferings were intended to effect. Such was his stupendous love to God, whose glory he sought; and to men, whose souls he had undertaken to redeem! This was the end which he proposed to himself in all: and "this was the joy that was set before him, as his only inducement to endure the cross, and to despise the shame." Consult all the sacred records, the types and prophecies of the Old Testament, or the uniform declarations of the New Testament, and the salvation of man will be found to have been the one end of all that he either did or suffered: "He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" — — —]

[a] Ps. lxix. 9, 20. The other passages connected with these in ver. 9. and 21. shew infallibly that the Apostle cites the text in its true, and not in an accommodated, sense.

Let us now proceed to consider,

II. The instruction founded upon it—

This is two-fold:

1. That we also should not please ourselves—

[There is a proneness in men to follow their own inclinations, without considering what may be the effect of their conduct on the minds of others. But in no case whatever should we be guilty of this: it is directly contrary to love, the invariable character of which is, that it "seeketh not her own." We have perhaps a clearer insight into the nature and extent of Christian liberty than others: but shall we therefore use that liberty in a way that may ensnare them, or wound their feelings? No: "the strong ought to bear with the infirmities of the weak, and not to please themselves." *The sacrifice must be made on the part of the strong;* and the stronger any profess themselves to be, the more should this self-denial be exercised by them. This is a subject peculiarly worthy the attention of all who "profess godliness." It is much to be lamented, that many carry their zeal for religious liberty to a very undue extent: the mere circumstance of a thing being required by law or custom, is sufficient to make them violent against it: and they would rend the Church into a thousand parties, rather than comply with a prescribed rite or ceremony, even of the most innocent kind. We mean not by this observation to justify the imposing of any thing which is wrong, or that admits of any serious doubt: but there must be, and there are in every Church under heaven, some rules and orders of human appointment; and, where there is no moral evil in them, they should be observed "for the Lord's sake:" and to be rigid and fierce in our opposition to them, merely because they are established by law, whilst we conform to others that are established only by this or that particular society of Christians, is unreasonable, inconsistent, and highly unbecoming. Such was not the conduct of our blessed Lord, who, though he had no sin to wash away, submitted to John's baptism, notwithstanding it had never been enjoined by the Mosaic law; and wrought a miracle to pay a tax, from which he might have justly pleaded his right of exemption. St. Paul also has in this respect set us a beautiful example, "making himself the servant of all," and "becoming all things to all men, for the Gospel's sake[b]." This was a truly Christian spirit, which we should ever study to imitate; submitting cheerfully to an abridgment of our liberty in matters of indifference, instead of acrimoniously vindicating our rights, and "using our liberty for a cloak of maliciousness."]

[b] 1 Cor. ix. 19—23.

2. That we should seek rather the edification of others—

[To "please our neighbour" is an object well worthy our pursuit: for it is by pleasing him that we shall gain the more easy access to him, for the benefit of his soul. Not that we should attempt to please him by any *sinful* compliance: for "if *in that sense* we please men, we cannot be the servants of Jesus Christ." The proper limit to our compliance is here assigned: we must go so far only as will be "for his good to edification." Do we think him too much leaning to the side of needless scrupulosity or superstitious fear? let us not despise his weakness, but act towards him with all imaginable tenderness and forbearance. Do we behold in him a readiness to be offended or grieved at any liberty in which we indulge ourselves? let us cheerfully condescend to his infirmity in a way of conciliation and concession. To "win his soul" should be in our estimation a rich recompence for all the kindness we can manifest, and all the self-denial we can exercise. This was the line of conduct which St. Paul both enjoined to us, and himself practised: "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth — — — even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved[c]."

But to recur to the example of our blessed Lord, to which our attention is more especially directed. We see to what an extent he carried these virtues, even to a relinquishment of all the glory of heaven, and to a suffering of all "the pains of of hell," for the welfare, not of his friends and brethren, but of his most inveterate enemies: yes, "*even* CHRIST" (whose pleasure the whole universe ought incessantly to consult) "pleased not himself." Shall *we* then be backward to deny ourselves? *we*, whose only hope is founded on the self-denial that Christ has exercised for us; and who are bound even to "lay down our lives for the brethren?" No: "Let the same mind be in us as was in Christ Jesus; and let us look, not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others[d]."]

The subject thus viewed may well suggest to us the following REFLECTIONS:

1. How extensive and amiable is true religion!

[Religion consists not in notions, nor even in outward actions; but in the habits and dispositions of the mind: it consists in a subjugation of self in all its bearings, and in a conformity of heart to the mind that was in Christ Jesus. And O! what a world would this be, if true religion universally

[c] 1 Cor. x. 24, 33. [d] Phil. ii. 4, 5.

prevailed! Some have thought that piety thus exercised would excite admiration in all who beheld it: but unhappily we know the contrary: for our blessed Lord exhibited it in its utmost possible perfection; and was the more hated on account of the brightness of his example. But still there is something in this conduct that carries its own evidence along with it; and we cannot but feel, that the more it prevails, the more happiness must be diffused all around us. Only conceive, for a moment, every professor of Christianity "walking precisely as Christ walked," "not pleasing himself" in any thing, but studying in all things to please, and benefit, mankind! Conceive him to be so intent on this blessed work, as readily to bear all manner of reproaches and distresses for the furtherance of it! Could this fail of diffusing happiness wherever he went? Let it then be our endeavour to foster, both in ourselves and others, this heavenly disposition: and "whatever is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, let us think of these things," and practise these things*; that so all men may "see that we are Christ's, by the Spirit which he has given us."]

2. How little is there of true religion in the world!

[In polished society we behold some semblance of this: the very essence of good breeding is, so to demean ourselves as to give no offence to any, but pleasure and satisfaction to all. And it is happy for the world, that, where higher principles are wanting, there is a substitute for piety in the established usages of mankind. But however this substitute may answer many valuable purposes in society, it is of no value in the sight of God, since it is almost always laid aside in the domestic circle, and never exercised from any principle of love to God. In truth, we cannot conceive any thing more contrary to the deportment of the Lord Jesus Christ, than the insincere professions, which pass for politeness among men: so that it is in vain to look for any conformity to Christ *in the world*. Nor shall we find much even in *the Church* itself. There is a deplorable want of a Christian spirit amongst the generality of those who profess the Gospel. Every party, instead of endeavouring by kindness and concessions to conciliate others, is ready to erect a barrier against others, on purpose to prevent that harmony which should subsist amongst all the members of Christ's mystical body. "Brethren, these things ought not so to be:" they are most offensive to God, and most injurious to yourselves: and yet persons who live in the indulgence of these hateful tempers, will call themselves followers of Christ; as if "a fountain could at the same place

* Phil. iv. 8.

send forth sweet water and bitter[f]." But woe be to those in whom "this earthly, sensual, devilish, wisdom" is found[g]: they cannot on earth, nor will they in heaven, be found acceptable worshippers before God. Pray then, brethren, to our common Father, that your souls may be filled with more holy dispositions; and that, "being made like-minded one towards another, according to Christ Jesus, ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ[h]."]

3. How conducive to piety is an intimate acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures!

[In reading the Holy Scriptures, we should aim particularly at our own spiritual improvement: and, in that view, we should notice with peculiar care the spirit that is inculcated in the precepts, and the disposition that is exercised by the saints of God. If we are not principally attentive to this object, we shall lose more than half the benefit that would result to us from the perusal of them. It is probable, that, in the many hundred times that we may have read the 69th Psalm, we never noticed the very point mentioned by St. Paul, notwithstanding he has taken such care to direct our attention to it! Alas! it is to little purpose to read the Scriptures, if we do not read them with a practical application of them to our own souls. But if we read them in this way, behold, what unspeakable benefit we may derive from them! Brethren, let not a day pass without treasuring up in your minds some passage that shall lead you into a fuller knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, and a more entire conformity to his image. We are told, that "whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning[i]:" and we see in the application of the prophecy before us, what valuable instruction is to be drawn from that sacred source. Treat every passage then in this way. Treasure it up in your minds: consider all that it either expresses or implies: and apply it to your souls for your more abundant edification in faith and love. So shall you grow up into Christ as your living Head, and progressively "be changed into his image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord."]

[f] Jam. iii. 9—12.
[g] Jam. iii. 14, 15.
[h] ver. 5, 6.
[i] ver. 4.

MDCCCCXX.

PREFERRING THE GOOD OF OTHERS.

Rom. xv. 5, 6. *Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

IN order to glorify God, we should deny ourselves for the benefit of others.

In the apostolical Churches there were many evils to be corrected. These arose, partly from the vast diversity of states from which the converts were brought to unite with each other in one Church; but they arose also, more particularly, from the corruptions of the human heart. Selfishness is not peculiar to any age or place, but extends itself through the whole race of mankind; and to correct this is one of the great objects of the Gospel of Christ. For the correction of it the Scriptures supply the richest instruction: for the correction of it they exhibit also the brightest example. To *both* of these we are directed in the passage before us.

We will consider,

I. The example of Christ here proposed to us—

[To enter into this we must consider the state in which our blessed Lord was from all eternity; his glory and felicity in the bosom of his Father. What would *he* have done had he considered only his own happiness? He would have left the world in the same way as he did the fallen angels. But how *did* he act? He assumed our nature in its fallen state; submitted to all the evils incident to that state; endured the contradiction of sinners throughout his life; bore the very wrath of God himself even unto death; and by this has redeemed our souls from death, and restored us to the favour of our offended God. Thus, instead of pleasing himself and disregarding us, he disregarded himself to benefit us.]

II. The obligation that lies upon us to follow it—

[Our blessed Lord is set forth as an example to us: in the above respects we need more especially to follow him. Man as fallen, thinks of nothing but his own personal gratification:

* A Sketch extemporaneously given to a young friend.

man, as redeemed, continues also but a selfish creature. Self-denial is a grace which we are very averse to exercise: we press even duty to the side of self-indulgence, and enlist conscience in the service of our own lusts. But love should be seated on the throne of our hearts; its dictates alone should be followed in all things. The waving the felicity of heaven for a season, and incurring for a season the pains of hell, would scarcely be too high a standard to aim at for the good of others. This was our Lord's example; and in this we should endeavour to follow his steps[a].]

III. The high attainments to which we should aspire in the prosecution of it—

[The want of this spirit produces much disunion in the Church, and brings much dishonour to God; the exercise of this spirit renders the Church a prelude to heaven. To glorify God should be the one object of all; and in this there should be one heart, one mind, one faith, throughout the whole. To the attainment of this should every one aspire, and to contribute towards it should be the one labour of his life.

But it may be asked, How can all this ever be attained? how can creatures, who have so little natural forbearance, in whose minds there is such a proneness to irritation and disquietude, ever be brought to such a state as this? Truly, if we looked into ourselves, our state would be hopeless; but in God there is all that we stand in need of. Need we *patience?* He is a *God* of *patience;* possessed of it in all its fulness. Does such a fulness of comfort appear beyond the reach of mortal man? God is a *God* of *comfort* also; ready to bestow it out of his own inexhaustible, immeasurable fulness; and to him we are here directed to lift up our eyes, in earnest and assured expectation. There is nothing which he cannot work in the mind of man. He who wrote his law on tablets of stone, can write it on the fleshy tables of our hearts: he who upheld his own law in all that he did and suffered, can effect the same blessed work in us also; and this he has promised to his Church and people; has promised it by covenant and by oath. Look to him then as your covenant God and Father; plead with him the glory that will result to himself from the exercise of these graces; and, in dependence on his strength, go forth to the fulfilment of this duty: "Seek not your own things;" "prefer others in honour before yourselves;" "seek not even your own *profit,*" as abstracted from that of others, but "seek the profit of many, that they may be saved;" and know that the more you deny yourselves for the benefit of others, the more you will resemble Christ, and glorify your God.]

[a] Phil. ii. 4, 5.

MDCCCCXXI.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM.

Rom. xv. 8—12. *Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people. And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in him shall the Gentiles trust.*

THERE is in man by nature such an inordinate portion of self-love, that his regards are almost exclusively confined to those who coincide with him in sentiment and contribute to his comfort. The smallest difference of opinion in things either political or religious shall be sufficient to produce not only indifference, but in many instances alienation and aversion. We do not much wonder at a want of mutual affection between the Jews and Gentiles, because they imbibed from their very infancy the most inveterate prejudices against each other, and had all their principles and habits as opposite as can be conceived. But, unhappily for the Christian Church, the same disposition to despise or condemn each other remained amongst them, after they were incorporated in one body, and united under one Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. To counteract this unhallowed temper, and to promote a cordial union amongst all the members of Christ's mystical body, was the incessant labour of St. Paul. In the whole of the preceding context he insists on this subject, recommending mutual forbearance and affection from the example of Christ, who shewed the same regard both to Jews and Gentiles, both to strong and weak[a].

In the words before us we see,

I. The extent of Christ's Church—

[a] ver. 1—3, 5—7. with the text.

The ministry of our blessed Lord had respect,

1. Primarily, to the Jews—

[Jesus was himself born a Jew; and he submitted to circumcision, which was the initiatory rite whereby the Jews were received into covenant with God. When he entered upon his ministerial office, he addressed himself exclusively to those of the circumcision: when solicited to confer his blessings on a Syro-phenician woman, he refused; saying, that he was "sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel;" and that "he could not take the children's bread and cast it unto dogs[b]:" though, for the encouragement of all future supplicants, of whatever nation or character, he afterwards granted her request[c]. When he sent forth his Disciples into all the cities, towns, and villages, he expressly forbade them to enter into any city of the Gentiles or Samaritans[d]. Even after his resurrection, he enjoined his Disciples to make the first overtures of mercy to the Jews, notwithstanding they had so recently imbrued their hands in his blood[e]. And though he gave them a commission to carry his Gospel into all the world[f], they still retained their prejudice respecting the exclusive privileges of the Jews: the people who were scattered abroad on the persecution of Stephen, went every where speaking the word to none but Jews only[g]: and when, after the space of six years, this prejudice was opposed by the miraculous interposition, and incontrovertible attestation, of God himself, the Apostles with difficulty acquiesced, saying, "Then hath God unto the Gentiles also granted repentance unto life[h]." Even St. Paul himself, who from his first conversion was constituted more especially the minister of the uncircumcision, laboured first to convince the Jews, and turned not to the Gentiles, till the invincible obstinacy of the Jews rendered his further attempts to instruct them altogether hopeless[i].

In all this the Lord Jesus consulted "the truth of God, and confirmed the promises made to the fathers;" which, though they comprehended *all* the spiritual seed of Abraham, had doubtless respect to those in the first place who should also be found among his lineal descendants[k].]

2. Ultimately, to the Gentiles also—

[In the very promises made to Abraham, the Gentile nations were expressly included[l]. But, to confirm this truth, St. Paul brings passages out of all the different parts of the Old

[b] Matt. xv. 23—26. [c] Matt. xv. 28. [d] Matt. x. 5.
[e] Luke xxiv. 47. [f] Mark xvi. 15. [g] Acts xi. 19.
[h] Acts xi. 18. [i] Acts xiii. 46, 47. [k] Gen. xvii. 1—8.
[l] Rom. iv. 16—18. Gal. iii. 7—9, 28, 29.

Testament, "the law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms[m]," to prove his point. It is needless to enter into a minute examination of all the passages adduced, since the authority of an inspired Apostle is proof sufficient that they all relate to the point in hand. In the first passage, David speaks in the person of the Messiah; and declares, that, in consequence of the subjugation of his enemies, he will promote the Father's glory among all the nations of the world[n]. In the next, Moses exhorts the Gentiles, when made partakers of all the blessings of redemption, to unite with the Jews in celebrating the event with holy joy[o]. The third passage, which is selected from the Psalms, is of similar import with the foregoing[p]. And the last, which is more express and pertinent than any of the former, is a prophecy that the Gentiles shall trust in and obey Him, who was, as God, "the root;" and, as man, "the offspring," of David and of Jesse[q].

These testimonies unequivocally prove, that, however Jesus, for the accomplishing of the promises, ministered to the circumcision chiefly, yet he did not confine his regards to them, but ordained that all, of whatever nation, should equally be admitted to his covenant, and be made partakers of his salvation.]

The Apostle's main point respecting the extent of the Church being proved, we would call your attention to what he incidentally mentions; namely,

II. The duty of all its members—

To whomsoever our Lord communicated his salvation, it was his invariable purpose that they who partook of it should "glorify God for his mercy." The manner in which this is to be done, may be gathered from the passages that are cited. The duty of every member of Christ's Church is,

1. To submit to him—

[Christ is "risen to reign over the Gentiles." Now where there is government, there must be subjection: and consequently all who would belong to Christ must "take his yoke upon them." Their submission too must be willing and unreserved: they must say, like Paul at his conversion, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do[r]?" If we retain in any thing a will contrary to his will, and a practice contrary to his commands, we are rebels and enemies: and if we say respecting

[m] Our Lord thus divides the Old Testament, Luke xxiv. 44.
[n] Ps. xviii. 49. [o] Deut. xxxii. 43. [p] Ps. cxvii. 1.
[q] Isai. xi. 10. with Rev. xxii. 16. [r] Acts ix. 6.

him, "I will not have this man to reign over me[s]," he will ere long say respecting us, "Bring hither those that were mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, and slay them before me[t]."]

2. To trust in him—

[Christ comes, not only as a Lord, but as a Saviour; through whom we are to find deliverance from the wrath to come. Now it is said, that "in him shall the Gentiles trust." Our duty towards him is, to believe that he is equal to the task which he has undertaken; that in him there is a fulness of wisdom to instruct the ignorant, of righteousness to justify the guilty, and of grace to sanctify the polluted. We should entertain no conceit of our own sufficiency, nor any doubts of his. We should renounce every kind and degree of self-confidence, and repose all our trust in him alone. Whatever be our character, this is our duty: the learned must look to him for guidance, as much as the most illiterate: the moral must look for acceptance through his righteousness, as much as the most immoral: the strong must depend entirely on his arm, as much as the weakest person in the universe. There is one mode in which all recline upon their bed for the rest of their bodies; and this is the mode which all must adopt in reference to Christ, in order that they may find rest unto their souls[u].]

3. Rejoice in him—

[To "rejoice in the Lord always[x]" is not merely permitted, as a privilege, but commanded, as a duty. We dishonour him when we do not rejoice in him: we evidently shew that we have a low apprehension of his excellency, and of the benefits which he confers. What they are doing in the Church above, that we should be doing in the Church below. Our obligations are the same, and so should also our occupations be. Are the glorified saints incessantly admiring and adoring him who is the Author of all their happiness[y]? We also should ever be contemplating the incomprehensible wonders of his love[z], and "rejoicing in him with joy unspeakable and glorified[a]." Let not religion be viewed as a system of restraints, but as a fountain of joys; for "all her ways are ways of pleasantness and peace." The effect of it on all who embraced it in the first ages was, to fill the soul with joy[b]: and such will be its effect on us, if we do not by sin and unbelief provoke the Saviour to hide his face from us.]

[s] Luke xix. 14.
[t] Luke xix. 27.
[u] 1 Pet. v. 7. Isai. l. 10.
[x] Phil. iv. 4.
[y] Rev. iv. 8. and v. 12.
[z] Eph. iii. 18, 19.
[a] 1 Pet. i. 8.
[b] Acts ii. 41, 46. and viii. 8, 39.

4. Walk in his steps—

[This is the particular scope of the text; the intent for which all these quotations are introduced. Our blessed Saviour has shewn a gracious and merciful regard for all the human race: nor has he permitted any diversity in their habits or conduct to exclude them from his kingdom, provided they repent and obey his Gospel. Now our hearts should be enlarged after his example. We should not suffer little circumstantial differences to alienate us from each other. While we claim a right to follow our own judgment, we should cheerfully concede the same liberty to others. A difference of conduct may be proper for different persons, or for the same persons under different circumstances. This is evident from Paul refusing to suffer Titus to receive circumcision, when he had already administered that rite to Timothy; as also from his performing at Jerusalem the vows of a Nazarite, after he had for twenty years renounced the authority of the ceremonial law. It is therefore by no means necessary that we all conform precisely to the same rule in indifferent matters: but it is necessary that we cultivate charity, and maintain "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." If we be not perfectly agreed in sentiment respecting things that are non-essential, we must at least agree in this, to leave every one to the exercise of his own judgment: the weak must not judge the strong, nor the strong despise the weak[c], but all follow after "the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another[d]."]

[c] Rom. xiv. 3. [d] Rom. xiv. 19.

MDCCCCXXII.

THE HOLY GHOST THE AUTHOR OF HOPE.

Rom. xv. 13. *Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.*

CHRISTIANS, even in the purest ages of the Church, have been too ready to indulge a spirit of bigotry and contention. The Jewish and Gentile converts in every place were much addicted to it. St. Paul, studious to counteract it in those at Rome, shews that Christ, though a minister of the circumcision, intended to incorporate the Gentiles into his Church; and prays for both parties, that, as the

means of restoring union among themselves, they might be endued with more grace. His words shew us,

I. The privileges of true Christians—

The world forms a very false estimate of the Christian's portion; and Christians themselves too often live below their privileges. It is their privilege to be be filled,

1. With lively joy—

[No one in the world has so much cause for joy as they ——— The man healed by Peter and John fitly, though imperfectly, represents their state ——— Nor is their joy like that of sinners, which soon expires in spleen and melancholy[a]. They may "rejoice evermore," and without ceasing.]

2. With abiding peace—

[It would be thought by many that "peace" should have preceded "joy"; but the experience of God's people accords exactly with the Scriptures[b]. Being freed from the torment of a guilty conscience, they have peace with God[c]. Christ has both purchased for them, and bequeathed to them, his peace, which passeth all understanding[d]. Their "peace may well be as a river, since their righteousness is as the waves of the sea[e]."]

3. With assured hope—

[This is the fruit, rather than the root, of peace and joy. They have the promise and oath of God on their side[f], and have already received in their souls an earnest of their inheritance[g]. Well therefore may they enjoy a confident expectation of the promised land. All indeed are not sufficiently studious to "walk thus in the light:" but, what the Apostle prayed for on the behalf of all, it is the privilege of all to possess.]

The Apostle further directs us,

II. How we may attain the enjoyment of them—

In this short and comprehensive prayer we are taught to seek them,

1. From God as the fountain—

[God in himself is "a consuming fire:" but in Christ he

[a] Eccl. vii. 6. and Prov. xiv. 13.
[b] Compare Isai. lv. 12. with the text.
[c] Rom. v. 1.
[d] John xiv. 27. and Phil. iv. 7.
[e] Isai. xlviii. 18.
[f] Heb. vi. 17, 18.
[g] Eph. i. 14.

is the "God of hope," and the source of all good[k]. It is he who provided for us the Saviour, and accepted him in our behalf; and has promised to cast out none who come to him in his Son's name. In vain will be the use of other means, if we apply not to him in prayer. But nothing is too great for God to give to the believing suppliant.]

2. By faith as the means—

[God has "treasured up a fulness for us in Christ Jesus;" and out of it we receive by faith according to the full extent of our necessities. By faith we resemble an infant at the mother's breast — — — However favoured we are, we can receive nothing but by the exercise of faith[l]; but "in believing we shall be *filled* with joy and peace." It is faith that enables us to realize invisible things, and, by discovering Christ to the soul, "to rejoice in him with joy unspeakable and glorified;" and, by experiencing this joy of faith, our hope is augmented and confirmed[k].]

3. Through the Holy Ghost as the agent—

[There is no power less than his that will produce these things. The whole work of grace is, not by might nor by power, but by God's Spirit[l]. He will afford us clear discoveries of the heavenly glory. He will witness to us our adoption, and seal us with God's image[m]. And thus while he forms us to a meetness for heaven, he gives us also a foretaste of it in our hearts.]

INFER—

1. How much happier is the Christian than others even in this world[n]! — — —

2. How happy will the Christian be when he shall receive these communications from the Deity, not through the narrow and obstructed channel of faith, but immediately at the fountain head[o]! — — —

3. How deservedly will they be left destitute of this happiness hereafter, who now give the pleasures of sin their decided preference[p]! — — —

[k] Jam. i. 17. [l] Jam. i. 6, 7. [k] Rom. v. 5.
[l] Zech. iv. 6. [m] 2 Cor. i. 22. [n] Deut. xxxiii. 29.
[o] 1 Cor. xiii. 12. [p] Prov. i. 22—31.

MDCCCCXXIII.

MINISTERING TO THE GENTILES, A GOOD WORK.

Rom. xv. 15, 16. [*The*] *grace* [*that*] *is given to me of God, that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the Gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.*

THE calling of the Gentiles was, with the Apostle Paul, a very favourite subject of contemplation: and no wonder: for he had been appointed of God to be the minister of the Gentiles: and, in proportion as the prejudices of the Jews were hostile to their conversion, there was need of more abundant zeal in him who was ordained to promote it.

In the chapter before us he speaks very strongly on this subject. He affirms, indeed, that Jesus Christ was, in the first instance, "a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers:" but that a further end of his mission was, "that the Gentiles also should glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. And again, Praise the Lord, O ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people. And again Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse; and He that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in him shall the Gentiles trust[a]."

On this subject the Apostle wrote most explicitly to the Church at Rome, which consisted chiefly of Gentile converts. With the Jews he was more reserved upon it, because of the inveteracy of their prejudices, which he did not wish unnecessarily to excite; though, when occasion required, he was as firm in maintaining it with them, as with the Gentiles themselves. But to the Church at Rome, which consisted chiefly of Gentiles, he wrote more boldly, "because of the grace given to him of God, to be in a more especial manner the minister of Christ to them."

[a] ver. 8—12.

In discoursing on the Apostle's words, we shall open to you,

I. The office committed to him—

He was appointed in a more peculiar manner "the minister of the Gentiles[b]." To this he was ordained at his first conversion[c]; and he accounted this as a very singular honour, for which he was most highly indebted to the grace of God[d]. In the execution of this office he acted,

1. As a Preacher to them—

["He ministered to them the Gospel of God;" and preached to them a free and full salvation, through the Lord Jesus Christ———The Jews in general, indeed, had no idea that such a mercy was designed for the Gentiles: but to the Apostle Paul it was "made known by a special revelation, that the Gentiles were to be fellow-heirs with the Jews, and of the same body, and partakers of God's promise in Christ by the Gospel[e]." This, therefore, he proclaimed to them in a most fearless manner; and with such indefatigable industry, that "from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum he fully preached the Gospel of Christ[f]."]

2. As a Priest to God—

[It was for priests alone to present any offerings to God. To this office amongst the Jews St. Paul had no right; because he was of the tribe of Benjamin, and not of the tribe of Levi. But amongst the Gentiles he was at full liberty to perform it. They were his offering, even as many as he was instrumental in converting to the faith of Christ. In this light they had been represented by the Prophet Isaiah; who, speaking of the preachers in the latter day, says, "They shall declare my glory among the Gentiles; and they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord, even to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord[g]." Now the offerings under the law were sanctified unto the Lord[h]; some with water, *as the Levites*, when they were dedicated to him; and others with oil, *as the first-fruits*, which were to be presented to the Lord as his exclusive property[i]. In both these views were converts to be consecrated to the Lord; for, under the Gospel, the whole body of

[b] Rom. xi. 13.
[c] Acts ix. 15. and xxii. 21.
[d] Eph. iii. 1, 2, 7, 8.
[e] Eph. iii. 3, 6.
[f] ver. 19.
[g] Isai. lxvi. 19, 20.
[h] Numb. viii. 7, 11, 15, 21.
[i] Lev. xxiii. 13, 17.

believers are a "holy *priesthood*[k]:" and all of them "are begotten of God by the word of truth, that they may be a kind of *first-fruits* of his creatures[l]." But it is "by the Holy Ghost that they are sanctified," even by his Almighty operation on their souls: "He sanctifies them wholly, in body, soul, and spirit[m];" and thus renders them altogether "acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ[n]."]

But though this office was assigned to Paul in the first instance, yet we hesitate not to affirm,

II. The acceptableness of it, by whomsoever executed—

We mean not to say, that any one at this day is to arrogate to himself the apostolic office: *that* has long since passed away; nor can be revived, without a special revelation from heaven. But preachers to men, and priests to God, we may all be; though some in a more subordinate sense than others.

We may all labour for the conversion of the Gentile world—

[Some of us may engage in that holy work *in our own persons:* and a nobler or more honourable vocation cannot be exercised on earth. Christians, in general, have by no means such exalted notions of the missionary office as they ought to have. Even those who look up with reverence to stated ministers who superintend one particular charge, are apt to regard a missionary as a sort of vagrant, that occupies a very subordinate office in the Church of God. But the very reverse of this is true. The missionary approximates far more to the apostolic office; and is elevated in honour above the stationary minister, in proportion as his self-denial is greater and his work more arduous. And I cannot but earnestly recommend to those who are educating for the ministry, to consider whether they may not render to God and to the world a more acceptable service, by devoting themselves to that high employment of preaching the Gospel to some portion of the Gentile world — — —

But all of us may labour in this good work, *through the instrumentality of others.* Persons of either sex, and of every quality, contributed towards the constructing and furnishing of the Tabernacle[o]: the same also concurred in the rebuilding of Jerusalem[p]. And, in raising the spiritual Jerusalem, too,

[k] 1 Pet. ii. 9. [l] Jam. i. 18. [m] 1 Thess. v. 23.
[n] 1 Pet. ii. 5. with the text. [o] Exod. xxxv. 21—29.
[p] Neh. iii. 12.

all may co-operate with effect. St. Paul speaks of "women who laboured with him in the Gospel[q]:" and not unfrequently are they of most extensive service to the Church of God; assisting in a great variety of ways the cause of God, and advancing, in their own line, as much as ministers do in theirs, his kingdom in the world[r]. The contributing, or raising of contributions for the support of missionaries, is an office which they can perform with very superior effect: and if in no other respect they can be useful, there is not one who may not contribute to the success of missions by offering up their prayers to God in their behalf. This is the duty of all, without exception: for our Lord has commanded all to pray, "Thy kingdom come:" and if the people of God were more united and more earnest in presenting this petition to the Lord, there can be no doubt but that God would hasten forward that glorious day, in answer to their prayers[s].]

And this will be truly "acceptable" to the Lord—

[God smelled a sweet savour, when offerings were presented to him in the days of old. And will he not, when we present to him such offerings as these? Yes: *God the Father* will accept them: for it is "his Gospel that is preached," even "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God[t]." It was He who devised this way of salvation for fallen man, and sent his own Son to effect it, and accepted the sacrifice of his Son in our behalf: and therefore we can have no doubt but that he will be well pleased with having that Gospel ministered to, and embraced by, the Gentile world. And *God the Son*, too, will be pleased: for it is "His servants that we are," and it is his kingdom which we labour to establish in the world. And *God the Holy Ghost* also will most joyfully accept the offering, because it is He who sanctifies it, in every case. It is he who renders our word effectual, and seals it on the souls of men. It is he who makes use of that word to purify them throughout, and to transform them into the Divine image. In a word, it is his work that we perform; or rather, we are mere instruments in his hands: for neither is Paul any thing, nor Apollos any thing; but God is "all in all."

Shall we not then all, according to our ability, engage in such a work as this? Methinks it is a work which the first archangel in heaven might account it his highest honour to perform. Nor shall any who engage in this work lose his reward: for God has said, that "every man shall receive according to his own labour[u];" and, that "they who turn

[q] Phil. iv. 3.
[r] Rom. xvi. 1—4, 6, 12.
[s] Isai. lxii. 1, 2, 6, 7.
[t] 1 Thess. ii. 9. and 1 Tim. i. 2, 11.
[u] 1 Cor. iii. 8.

many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever[x]."]

APPLICATION—

1. Remember, in the first place, to offer up *yourselves* to God—

[This must precede every thing else. Nothing that you can do will be of any value, till this is done. St. Paul, when commending the Macedonians for their unparalleled liberality, mentions it to their honour, that "they first gave their own selves to the Lord[y]." Thus must all of you "present yourselves as living sacrifices to God," sanctified throughout by an unction from above, and by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. This is "your reasonable service;" and most "acceptable will it be to God[z]." If you do not this, it is in vain that the Gospel is ministered unto you. To effect this, is the scope of all our labours, and the great end also of God's tender "mercies[a]." It is for this end that you have been bought with a price; that you should no longer consider yourselves as at your own disposal; but that you should be *His* who bought you, and "glorify him with your bodies and your spirits, which are his[b]."]

2. Contribute to the utmost to the offering up of others—

[It is a blessed work wherein to be engaged. If we be successful in one single instance only, it will well repay the labours of a whole life. Who that knows the value of his own soul, must not pant after the salvation of the souls of others? And who, that knows his obligations to God, must not long to serve God in a way so acceptable to his mind, and so conducive to his glory? Let me not, then, call you to this work in vain. If there be any who are by education and by grace fitted for personal exertion in that field of labour, let him, like the Prophet, stand forth, and say, "Here am I: send me[c]." If it be only in a subordinate manner that you are able to assist in this good cause, still let it be seen that your heart is in it, and your labour according to the full extent of your ability. In your contributions, be liberal after your power: and in whatever way you can be useful, "give yourselves to the work" with cheerfulness, and persevere in it with diligence. Certainly, if ever united exertions were called for, it is now, when God is so evidently prospering the work, and putting honour on those who are engaged in it[d]——— "Come then, all of you, to the help of the Lord:" and "whatever your hand findeth to do, do it with all your might."]

[x] Dan. xii. 3. [y] 2 Cor. viii. 5. [z] Rom. xii. 1.
[a] Rom. xii. 1. [b] 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. [c] Isai. vi. 8.
[d] Here any particulars may be mentioned.

MDCCCCXXIV.

CHRISTIANS DEBTORS TO THE JEWS.

Rom. xv. 26, 27. *It hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.*

AMONGST all the subjects which occupy the minds of men, there is one, which, though it has as great a claim to our attention as any other, is, as it were by the general consent of the Christian world, kept entirely upon the back ground, and is scarcely ever so much as named;—I mean, our obligations to the Jews. Our blessed Lord has said, that "salvation is of the Jews;" and yet notwithstanding we have received salvation from them, we scarcely ever think of making any return to them, or of bringing them to a participation of the blessings which they have transmitted to us. True indeed, in theory, we trace up all the great truths of Christianity to the writings of the Old Testament, where they were primarily revealed and shadowed forth: but beyond the consideration of Judaism as the foundation of Christianity, and of Christianity as the completion of Judaism, we have in general scarcely a thought upon the subject. We hope that no apology will be deemed necessary for bringing to your view a point, which confessedly is of great importance; and which, if regarded as it ought to be, by those whom I have the honour to address, would soon engage the attention of Christians throughout the land[a].

In the apostolic age, the converts, whether from amongst Jews or Gentiles, all considered themselves as one great family, of which Christ was the Head. Accordingly, when those of Judæa were brought into circumstances of peculiar distress, partly through persecutions, and partly through the famine that prevailed in the days of Claudius Cæsar, the Christians

[a] Written with a view to the University; but never preached before them.

of other countries, especially of Macedonia and Achaia, gladly contributed for their relief. The pleasure with which they exerted themselves in this labour of love, is twice noticed by the Apostle: "It *pleased* them of Macedonia and Achaia; it *pleased* them verily;" that is, they took great delight in this act of kindness. But, whilst the Apostle thus records their benevolence, he acknowledges, that it was no more than the occasion justly demanded: for many of the Jewish Christians had shewn a very ardent zeal in extending to the Gentiles the knowledge of salvation through a crucified Redeemer; and therefore it was but right, that the Gentiles, who had been made partakers of their spiritual things, should impart liberally to their benefactors such a portion of their carnal things as the pressure of the times required: "It pleased them verily; and *their debtors they are.*"

Now this idea, that *the Gentile Christians are debtors to the Jews,* is that which we propose more largely to consider: and in the prosecution of it, we shall state,

I. Our obligations to the Jews;

II. The returns we should make them.

I. Our obligations to the Jews—

To the whole nation of the Jews, from the earliest period of their existence, we are greatly indebted. Let us first notice our obligations to *the patriarchs.* And here we will begin with *Abraham,* the father of the faithful. With him was made the covenant of grace, that covenant which is at this very moment the one ground of all our hopes. We, especially we Christians, know nothing of uncovenanted mercies. It is in Christ only that we can obtain salvation; in Christ, as our Surety, who has undertaken to discharge our debt, and to make reconciliation for us through the blood of his cross. The covenant of which we speak, was made with Abraham and his seed, particularly with that promised Seed, the Lord Jesus Christ[b]: and it is only as children of Abraham that we have any part in it[c]. Here then at once the

[b] Gal. iii. 16. [c] Rom. iv. 11, 16. Gal. iii. 7—9, 29.

obligations of the whole Christian world to Abraham are manifest to an unknown extent, inasmuch as every individual among them is indebted to him, for that covenant, which is the fountain and foundation of all their hopes.

To Isaac and Jacob also are we very greatly indebted: for they, in conjunction with Abraham, have shewn to us, in a way that has never been surpassed, the nature and operation of saving faith. God promised to Abraham a Seed in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed. According to all human appearances, the accomplishment of that promise was impossible: but Abraham "hoped against hope," and "staggered not at the promise through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." "Go out from thy house and kindred," says God to him, "and sojourn in a land which I will give thee." He went instantly, in dependence upon God's word, "not knowing whither he went." Go "take thy son Isaac, the promised seed whom I have given thee, and offer him up for a burnt-offering on a mount that I will tell thee of." He instantly goes to execute the divine command, not doubting but that God will restore his son to life again, even after he should have been offered on the altar, and reduced to ashes. In like manner Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise, sojourned in the land of Canaan, in full expectation, that it should be inherited by their posterity, though as yet they had not a foot of ground in it. They had opportunities enough to return to their own country, if they had chosen it; but they determined rather to be as strangers and pilgrims on the earth all their days; thereby "declaring plainly, that they sought a better country, that is, an heavenly one, and looked for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God[d]."

Now here we see what faith is: it is such a practical dependence upon the word of God, as leads us to trust in it without doubting, and to obey it without

[d] Compare Rom. iv. 19—21. with Heb. xi. 8—10, 13—19.

reserve. It is true, we are not required to go forth from our native country, and to live in a foreign land, as they did; but the same mind must be in us as was in them: like them we must consider ourselves altogether "as pilgrims and sojourners" here, having our hearts fixed entirely on things above, and our lives conformed to the precepts and injunctions of our God. If we had not such bright patterns of holiness before our eyes, we should be ready to think, that lower attainments would suffice; and that some limit might be assigned to the exercise of faith, or to the efforts of obedience: but here we see in men of like passions with ourselves, what a life of faith really is, and what is required of all those who profess themselves the people of the Lord. What an advantage is it to have such patterns before our eyes, and to behold before us the footsteps which will infallibly lead us to everlasting happiness and glory!

From the patriarchs we will proceed to notice *the prophets*, and our obligations to them. Of these, the first whom we will mention is *Moses*, that great prophet, like unto whom the Saviour himself was to arise*. To him we owe the moral law, even that law which discovers to us the extent of God's requirements, and consequently the depth of our depravity, and the impossibility of ever being saved by any obedience of our own. It is the knowledge of this law that alone can convince the soul of its lost and undone state without Christ; and it is intended by God as a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we may be justified by faith. Now we all consider ourselves indebted to those who have instructed us in our youth, especially if they have taught us important things which none other was able to communicate. How then are we all indebted to Moses for this infinitely important knowledge, which we never could have derived from any other source, and without which even the gift of God's only dear Son to die for us would never have been effectual for its desired ends! Besides, from this law every believer is in-

* Acts iii. 22

structed how to please and serve his God. It is a compendium of all that God requires of us: and, if only we follow that in all things, we are as infallibly sure of pleasing God, and of being rewarded by him at the last, as we are sure that there is a God in heaven. Are we not then greatly indebted to the man who has given us this directory?

But there is another law which we have received from Moses, even the ceremonial law; which though, as given to the Jews, it was an insupportable yoke of bondage, yet, as handed down to us, it is scarcely less profitable than the moral law itself. To the Jews it was a dark and shadowy representation of good things to come: those shadows now are all explained by the Gospel; so that, through the light of the Gospel, all the mysterious rites and ceremonies of the law are presented in a clear, definite, and instructive view, as typifying Christ in all his work and offices: and, whilst it thus derives light from the Gospel, it reflects light back again upon the Gospel itself, and renders that incomparably more clear than it would otherwise be. To illustrate this a little:—A drawing that should represent all the constituent parts of a complicated engine, would not be intelligible without a distinct explanation of them: but with the help of the explanation, it would be clear enough. On the other hand, the explanation itself would not be clear, if it had not the drawing to illustrate it. So it is with the Law as explained by the Gospel: it does indeed receive in the first instance all its light from the Gospel; but afterwards it presents such an elucidation of Gospel truths, as conveys them with astonishing beauty and force to the mind. Take, for instance, the scape-goat. You are told in the Gospel, that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin;" and that "all who believe are justified from all things:" but behold the high-priest slaying one goat, and sprinkling its blood upon the mercy-seat within the vail; and then laying both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confessing over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and then sending

him away into the wilderness never more to be seen by man[f]: who that contemplates this, and realizes in his mind the transaction, does not see the actual transfer of his sins to Christ, and the everlasting removal of them from his own soul? I say then, that for the ceremonial, no less than the moral law, we are greatly indebted to this faithful servant of our God.

Let us turn from him to *the prophets at large*, comprehending the whole collective body of them: what a chain of prophecy have they given us! what an accumulation of particulars, so as to render it impossible for any one who candidly compares the predictions with the events, to entertain a doubt, but that Jesus is the Christ! And let it be remembered, that they all suffered much at the hands of their fellow-creatures for their fidelity to God: and, at the time that they were delivering their prophecies, they knew that it was not for their own benefit, or the benefit of the existing generation, that they were testifying of these things, but for the instruction and benefit of generations yet unborn, even of us, to whom the Gospel is now fully revealed[g]. Do we owe them no gratitude for these self-denying labours? But, in order to appreciate more justly our obligations to them, let us suppose for a moment, that none of them had recorded the things revealed unto them, and that all their predictions had been forgotten: what would now have been the state of our minds in relation to the Saviour? With what doubts and fears should we have been agitated, and how uncertain should we have been at this hour, whether Christianity were not altogether "a cunningly-devised fable!" Do not let us forget, that the assurance which we enjoy respecting the truth of our holy religion, is altogether derived from them: for though the miracles of our Lord were a convincing evidence of his Messiahship to those who saw them, yet to us at this remote period the completion of prophecy is a far surer and firmer ground of confidence: and therefore to those who gave us such a minute and

[f] Lev. xvi. 15, 21, 22. [g] 1 Pet. i. 11, 12.

connected series of prophecies we ought to feel the greatest obligations.

There is however one prophet in particular whose name we cannot possibly pass over in silence;—I mean, the Prophet David. He has committed to writing all the secret workings of his heart, under all the diversified conditions into which he was brought, and has given to the Church this invaluable record, that all future saints, into whatever situation they might be brought, might be comforted and edified by his example. Where is there a child of God in the whole universe that does not account the Psalms of David his richest treasure? Who does not read them, and meditate upon them, and find them as marrow and fatness to his soul? Who that has any true religion in his soul, does not find the Psalms the means of his communication with heaven; the ladder, by which he daily, and as it were hourly, ascends to God? Is this no benefit? or is the conferring of it no ground of obligation? Verily the man to whom the name of David is not dear, evinces, that he has no taste for heavenly things, no just discernment of what is truly excellent.

It will of course be expected, that we should not overlook *the Apostles,* those faithful instructors in the whole counsel of God, and those bright examples of all holy obedience. What did not they endure, that they might carry the Gospel to the Gentiles? How did they go throughout all the known world, in labours most abundant, and in deaths oft, "not counting their lives dear unto them, so that they might but fulfil the ministry which they had received of the Lord Jesus, and testify the Gospel of the grace of God!" How many millions are now blessing God for them in heaven! How many too are daily adoring God for them on earth, for all the light of their instructions, and all the benefit of their examples! If those who have extended the blessings of civilization, of liberty, and of science, are called benefactors, what name shall we find whereby to testify our gratitude to the Apostles, for all the light,

and peace, and joy, and holiness, which through their instrumentality we possess.

We will content ourselves however with this brief mention of them, that we may fix our attention on Him to whom infinitely above all we are indebted,—*the Lord Jesus Christ.* He also was a Jew, "of the seed of David as pertaining to the flesh," though in his divine nature he was "over all, God blessed for ever." Where shall we begin to speak of the obligations which we owe to him? or, having begun, where shall we make an end? He did not merely engage in the covenant of grace as a party, like Abraham, but was the very Mediator and Surety of the covenant, who confirmed and ratified it with his own blood, and undertook, both on the part of God and man, that all the conditions of it should be fulfilled. He did not, like the prophets, merely utter predictions that should be afterwards accomplished, but actually accomplished in his own person all that had been predicted, and fulfilled every iota of what they had said should come to pass. Nor did he, like the Apostles, merely preach salvation to us, though at the expense of his own life; but he actually wrought out salvation for us, bearing our sins in his own body on the tree; and "becoming a curse for us," that we might be delivered from the curse of the broken law, and the wrath of an offended God. Nay more; after having wrought out an everlasting righteousness for us by his own obedience unto death, he has for nearly eighteen hundred years been incessantly occupied in securing to us the blessings of redemption by the efficacy of his all-prevailing intercession, and by the all-sufficient operations of his grace. He is at this very moment the Head of the whole mystical body, the Church; and is the source of life and strength to all his members. There is not amongst all the saints upon earth one holy desire, one good counsel, or one just thought, which does not proceed from him as its true and proper source: whatever any man possesses, he has received it out of the inexhaustible fulness of Jesus Christ: so that

neither on earth nor in heaven is there one who can arrogate any glory to himself: it all belongs to that blessed Saviour, "who liveth in us:" and to all eternity our song must be, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be the praise:" "To Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and our Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." Say now, brethren, whether, or not, ye are indebted to our ever adorable Emmanuel; and whether, if you neglect to praise him, the very stones will not cry out against you?

We hope by this time that the body of evidence which has been adduced has sufficiently established our obligations to the Jews, and has prepared us with some measure of sincerity to inquire into,

II. The returns we should make to them—

It is something more than mere acknowledgments that we are called to make: our duty towards them may be comprised under two particulars: first, We should *endeavour to secure for ourselves that salvation which the Jews of former ages have handed down to us:* and next, We should *endeavour by all possible means to make the Jews of this and future ages partakers of the same.*

1. We should endeavour to secure for ourselves that salvation which the Jews of former ages have handed down to us—

I would ask, Can it be conceived, that we are at liberty to neglect a salvation, which has been purchased for us at so great a price, and has been proclaimed to us in such a variety of ways? Have not all those who in successive ages have laboured for us, a right to expect from us some fruit of their labours? Hear the appeal which God himself makes to us respecting this matter: "O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes,

brought it forth wild grapes[h]?" Here is the very case in point. There is not any thing which we could possibly have desired, either for our conviction or encouragement, which God has not done; yea, he has far exceeded any thing we could have desired, or even thought. And is all this kindness to be requited with neglect? No: the Apostle justly says, "How shall ye escape, if ye neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him[i]!" "If so many things had not been done for us, we had not, comparatively, had sin: but now we have no cloak for our sin:" and all who have sought our welfare, whether patriarchs, or prophets, or Apostles, yea and our Lord Jesus Christ himself, will be swift witnesses against us, if we suffer all their labour to be in vain. All that they have done for us, "if it be not unto us a savour of life unto life, will be a savour of death unto death." The first return then which we are bound to make to God, and to all who, as his instruments, have sought our welfare, is, to give up ourselves wholly and unfeignedly to the Lord: and it is remarkable that the Apostle Paul, expressly referring to the collection made at Corinth on the very occasion mentioned in our text, says, "To their power, (I bear record,) yea and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves; praying us with much entreaty, that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And this they did, not as we hoped, but *first gave their ownselves to the Lord*[k]." This then must have the precedence of all. Whatever returns we may make either to God or man for the benefits we have received from the Jews, they are all nothing without this: we must "FIRST *give our ownselves to the Lord.*" "I beseech you then, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies and souls a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable

[h] Isai. v. 3, 4. [i] Heb. ii. 3, 4.
[k] 2 Cor. viii. 3—5.

service[l]." I would, in the name of the Most High God, lay claim to every soul here present, and say, "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God with your bodies and your spirits, which are his[m]." We call upon you, not to perform a work of supererogation, but to pay a debt: for God's debtors ye are; and this debt must be paid to him at the peril of your souls.

2. In the next place, having secured this salvation for ourselves, we should endeavour to make the Jews of this and future ages partakers of the same—

It may be thought, perhaps, that though we are debtors to the Jews of former ages, we owe nothing to those of this generation. But we would beg leave to state a case, which we apprehend will place this matter in its true point of view. Let us suppose, that a man of vast opulence had disinherited his own children on account of their misconduct towards him, and had bequeathed his whole possessions to us. Let us further suppose, that, after his descendants to the third or fourth generation had suffered all the most lamentable effects of his displeasure, it were in our power to benefit them, without at all injuring ourselves; yea, and perhaps to elevate them to their former rank and happiness, without the smallest diminution of our own property; should we not think that it was our duty to help them? Would not the very consideration of our having, without any merit or service on our part, come to the possession of *their* inheritance, give them some claim upon our compassion; so far at least as to benefit them, if we could do it without any loss to ourselves? Here then is the very case: "They were broken off from their own olive-tree, that we might be graffed in[n]:" and it is "of the root and fatness of *their* olive-tree that we are partaking" from day to day[o]: and, as we may by God's help be instrumental to the "graffing them again upon their own olive-tree," it is our bounden

[l] Rom. xii. 1.
[m] 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.
[n] Rom. xi. 17—19.
[o] Rom. xi. 24.

duty to do it, more especially as it is God's avowed purpose, that "they shall be graffed in," as soon as ever they repent them of their former sins, and look with sorrow on the Messiah, whom they have pierced. In this respect we may regard the Jews of this generation as the representatives of those of former ages, and discharge to them the debt which can no otherwise be paid to our original benefactors. If, notwithstanding their present degraded state, they are still "beloved by God for their fathers' sakes," much more should a regard for their fathers cause them to be beloved *by us*.

But if this illustration be not sufficient to convince us, then we will come to an express command of God, which cannot fail to carry conviction to every heart. It will be recollected by all who have paid any attention to the New Testament, that, in the 11th chapter to the Romans, it is said, that "through the fall of the Jews salvation is come unto the Gentiles[p];"—that "the fall of the Jews is the riches of the world, and the diminishing of the Jews the riches of the Gentiles[q];"—and, finally, that "the casting away of the Jews is the reconciling of the world[r]." But is this blessing which we inherit through them, to be engrossed by us, and no endeavour to be made on our part for their restoration to the Divine favour? No: *it is committed to us as a sacred deposit, to be improved for their good:* (I repeat these words; *It is a sacred deposit, to be improved for their good:*) it is delivered to us, not as proprietors, to use it as we please, but as stewards, to use it for the express purpose that our Lord and Master has enjoined: and this avowed purpose is, that by every means in our power we should bring the poor outcast Jews to the renewed enjoyment of their paternal inheritance: nor should we ever see a Jew without saying in our hearts, There is a man whose inheritance I possess, and to whom I am very deeply in debt. Let us hear the express declaration of God respecting it: "As ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now

[p] ver. 11. [q] ver. 12 [r] ver. 15.

obtained mercy through their unbelief; even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy[a]." Here let it be clearly seen, that the very end for which this mercy is committed unto us is, "that *through our mercy they also may obtain mercy*:" and if we do not improve, for the restoration of God's ancient people, the light and knowledge, the means and privileges, which we enjoy, we are unfaithful stewards. Were we speaking of a steward, who had alienated to his own use the property which we had entrusted to him for the benefit of others, we should find no terms too severe, not even those of thief and robber, whereby to characterize his conduct. We are unwilling to use such terms in reference to the Christian world, who have so long neglected their Jewish brethren; for we are persuaded, that this neglect has proceeded from ignorance and inattention to the subject, rather than from any wilful dereliction of the trust committed to them: but we must say, that, if the Jews continue to be neglected by us as they have been, we shall contract a fearful responsibility before God.

There is an idea, which is often suggested in order to excuse our supineness, namely, that they are so blind and hardened, that it is in vain to attempt their conversion. But whose fault is it that they are so blind and hardened? Is it not ours? If Christians had universally displayed in their life and conversation the superior excellence of their religion, is there not reason to think, that the Jews might by this time have been led to view it in a more favourable light? Is there not also reason to apprehend, that they have been confirmed in their prejudices against Christianity by the misconduct of its professors? What wonder is it that they are ignorant of Christianity, when the professors of it now for so many hundred years have made no efforts to enlighten them with respect to it? I say again, The fault is ours. If Christians had universally laboured for their salvation, as their forefathers did for ours, would there have been no

[a] ver. 30, 31.

converts from among them? Would none of them have been stirred up to make inquiry into the evidences of our religion, and to seek its blessings? But be it so, They are blind and obdurate. And what were we, when in our Gentile state? yea, what should we at this very instant have been, if their fathers had done no more for us, than we have for them? But the same grace that has wrought in us, can work in them; and the same divine power that converted myriads of their forefathers, can work effectually in the hearts of men in the present day: the power that first "commanded the light to shine out of darkness, can shine into the hearts of the very darkest among them; to give them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

By some it will be said, The time is not come. But who is authorized to say that the time is not come? We have rather reason to hope, that the time is come, or at least is near at hand: for there is confessedly at this present moment a greater zeal among Christians for the conversion of the Gentile world, and for the dissemination of God's word throughout the habitable globe, than has been at any other period since the apostolic age: and this gives reason to hope, not only that God is about to do great things among the Gentiles, but that he is about to visit the Jews also: for as, on the one hand, "blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in," that is, till the period for the fuller diffusion of divine light among the Gentiles be arrived; so, on the other hand, it is the fulness of the Jews, or the general conversion of them to Christianity, that is to be the riches of the Gentile world: according as it is written, "If the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the fall of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness[t]?" Here is a fulness of the Jews, as well as a fulness of the Gentiles: and each is to be subservient to the completion of the other. In neither case is it to be understood as the completion of the work of divine

[t] Rom. xi. 12, 25.

grace among them; but in both cases it relates to the commencement of that period when the work shall be completed. The diminution of the Jews was progressive; and so we trust will be the bringing in of the complement both of Jews and Gentiles. Indeed so far is it from being true that the whole Gentile world must be converted before the work of conversion shall *begin* among the Jews, that, as appears from the passage just referred to, the Jews in their converted state will be eminently instrumental in converting the Gentile world: and the circumstance of their dispersion through the world, and their knowledge of the languages of the countries where they dwell, peculiarly fits them for communicating to the Gentiles the light of divine truth, the very moment that they themselves receive it. We trust therefore that the very exertions which are now making for the Gentiles, have a favourable aspect on the Jews also. But there is at this time among the Jews themselves, and especially on the continent, a considerable expectation of their Messiah[u]: nor is it an ill omen, that the Christian world have begun to pay some attention to them, and to use means for their restoration to the Divine favour. We lay not any great stress upon the success of past endeavours; though that is by no means contemptible, considering what difficulties there have been to contend with; but we say, that, whether the time for their full conversion be come, or not, the time for exertion on our part is always come: the time for us to pay our debts is always at hand: and therefore, without presuming to judge of secrets which God has reserved in his own bosom, we call on all to discharge to that benighted people their debt of love.

Is it asked, What shall we do? we feel that we are their debtors; but we know not how to discharge our debts? I answer, What their fathers did for us, that is the thing which we should do for them. St. Paul said, "I am a debtor both to the Jews and to the Greeks:" and how did he discharge his debt? He

[u] In Britain also this now (1832) obtains to a considerable extent.

gave himself up altogether to the work of his ministry among the Gentiles; and counted not his life dear unto him, so that he might but fulfil it to their greatest advantage. He indeed had a particular call to the ministry, which does not extend to us: but we in our private capacity should be as strenuous for the welfare of our fellow-creatures, as he was in this official character as an Apostle: our modes of manifesting our regard for them will of course differ from his: but as far as our respective situations and characters will admit, we should exert ourselves to make known to them that Saviour, whom they have rejected and despised. It was not every Jew that preached to the Gentiles; nor is it every Christian that is to preach to the Jews: but in conversation with them we may do much good, and in putting into their hands the New Testament, or other useful books; and particularly in earnestly praying to God for them, we may bring down his blessing upon them. Besides, many united together for that end may effect incomparably more than the same number could in their separate and individual state. By encouraging therefore the Society that has been formed for the advancement of their welfare, we, though but small contributors ourselves, may be instrumental to the accomplishing of much good amongst them. The translating of the New Testament into pure Biblical Hebrew, and circulating that throughout all the world, is a work which we in particular, as patrons of learning and religion, shall do well to encourage. Were nothing more than the assisting of the Jews under some temporal calamity the object of this discourse, we should feel that we were warranted in calling upon you, not to be liberal, but to be *just;* not to present gifts, but to pay your *debts,* to that much neglected people: for "if we have been made partakers of their spiritual things, our duty is to minister unto them in carnal things." But we stand on far higher ground than the Apostle, and prefer a higher claim. It is the souls of the Jews which we would commend to your care, and their eternal

welfare which we would urge you to promote: and in this view all our claims upon you as debtors come with ten-fold weight. Alas! we are greatly and shamefully in arrears; but in proportion to our past neglect should be our future exertions: and, as we know not how little time may be allotted us for fulfilling our duties to them, "whatever our hand findeth to do, we should do it with our might."

*** *For the sake of those who may wish for a short compendiou view of the subject, the following* SKELETON *is annexed.*

ROM. XV. 26, 27.

CHRISTIANITY a religion of love—exemplified on the day of Pentecost, and here—

But this exercise of love was a *debt*:—"their *debtors* they are."

I. Our obligations to the Jews;

II. The return we should make them.

I. Our obligations to the Jews—

These Christians were Greeks, of a different nation from the Jews—

Yet were they debtors to the Jews; as we also are,

1. To the Patriarchs—

[Abraham—for the covenant of grace—and for a display of faith—

Isaac and Jacob—for illustrating a life of faith—]

2. To the Prophets—

[Moses—for the law { 1. Moral { a schoolmaster— / a rule— / 2. Ceremonial—*Scape-goat*—This, as a complicated drawing, both receives light from the Gospel, and reflects light on it—

All the prophets—for a chain of prophecy—

David—for records of his experience—*Ladder*—]

3. To the Apostles—

[For so full an account of Christ—

For their zeal, in risking life for us—

For their example—of highest virtues—]

4. To the Lord Jesus Christ—

He did not, { like Abraham, merely engage as a party in the covenant, but ratified it with his blood—
like the prophets, utter predictions; but fulfilled them—
like the Apostles, merely preach salvation; but obtained it for us—

He secures to us also by his life, what he procured for us by his death—

Who can tell the height and depth of his love?]

II. The return we should make them—

1. Endeavour to secure the salvation which the Jews of former ages have handed down to us—

[It would requite them ill to neglect it—
And would greatly aggravate our guilt—
The heathen are sinless in comparison—
"How shall we escape if, &c.?" Heb. ii. 3—
Our duty then is,
To trust in Christ—
To follow the counsels and example { of Patriarchs—
of Prophets—
of Apostles—]

2. Endeavour to make the Jews of this and future ages partakers of the blessings which we derive from their fathers—

[If they are beloved of God for the fathers' sake, much more should they be by us; Rom. xi. 28.

OBJ.—We owe nothing to them—

ANS.—We do, as the bereaved children of our blessed Benefactor.

QUERY—How are we to do it?

ANS.—As their fathers did for us: Use all active self-denying exertions—

OBJ.—'Tis in vain—they are hardened.

ANS.—Whose fault is that?—Ours—

Had we done for them as their fathers did for us, would it have been so?

Have we not rather been a stumbling-block?

OBJ.—The time is not come in their way—

ANS.—Who is authorized to say so?

We affirm that it is come—

1. God is awakening an attention to the world—in Bible Societies—Mission Societies, &c.

2. He has stirred up attention to the Jews—

3. He has excited an expectation of the Messiah, here and on the Continent—

4. He has given success already—

Some pious—and studious, preparing—

Success great, considering the efforts—

Ergo, it is come.

Rom. xi. 25, *misunderstood.* See ver. 12.

But if it were not come, our duty is the same—

Rom. xi. 30, 31, proves us unjust stewards if we do not—

We call you then, not to be generous but *just*—Pay your *debts*—

If we called on you for temporal relief only, we should say so—TEXT—"Our DUTY is to minister to their relief"—

But we stand on higher ground than Paul—

Think what *arrears* are due—

Let not our importunity, like that of common creditors or claimants, offend—

Let all the means in our power be used—

Do all with holy zeal—"It pleased" *twice*—

But let us, *in the first place*, give up our ownselves to the Lord; 2 Cor. viii. 5—

Then may we hope for most success, when we can say, "Come, and I will go also;" Zech. viii. 21.]

MDCCCCXXV.

THE GOSPEL A SOURCE OF BLESSINGS.

Rom. xv. 29. *I am sure, that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ.*

OF all the Apostles, St. Paul was by far the most abundant in labours. In this chapter he mentions the almost incredible pains he had taken in preaching throughout all that extensive region, "from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum, the Gospel of Christ." He was now going to Jerusalem, to carry thither the alms he had collected for the relief of the poor saints in Judæa: but as soon as he should have accomplished that object, it was his intention to proceed immediately for Spain, and to visit Rome in his way thither. Of this intention he apprises the Church at Rome. He tells them, in this epistle, that, though he had not been the means of planting a Church

among them, he considered himself "a debtor unto them, as well as unto other Gentiles;" and that "he longed exceedingly to see them, that he might impart to them some spiritual gift for the increase and establishment" of their faith and love[a]; and that "he was sure, that, when he should come to them, he should come in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ."

That we may understand what it was that he thus taught them to expect, we shall shew,

I. The blessings which the Gospel is intended to impart—

There is a fulness of blessings treasured up for men in Christ Jesus, and communicated to them by the preaching of the Gospel: and, in order to form any just conception of them, we must speak of them, not in the minuteness of detail, but in a large and comprehensive view. We may say of the Gospel then, that it imparts a fulness,

1. Of light and liberty—

[It comes to men whilst they are "sitting in darkness and the shadow of death," and fast bound in the iron yoke of sin. And to them it proclaims "a Saviour, and a great One, who is able and willing to deliver them[b]:" yea, it bids them shake off their chains, and "come forth out of their prison house, and out of darkness[c]." The operation of the Gospel upon the souls of men may be not improperly illustrated by the deliverance of Peter from his prison. There he was lying bound with two chains, and sleeping, though on the very eve of his expected execution. But God sent an angel to deliver him; and suddenly a light shined into the prison; and Peter was awakened from his sleep: and the chains fell off from his hands; and all the gates that seemed to oppose an insurmountable obstacle to his escape, opened to him of their own accord; so that, to the utter surprise of all his friends, he was brought forth at once to light and liberty[d]. We do not mean to say, that the effect of the Gospel is always thus sudden; but, whether the operation be more or less gradual, this is invariably the issue of it, wherever "it comes in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:" the persons wrought upon by it, "have their eyes opened, and are turned from darkness unto light, and from the

[a] Rom. i. 11—15.
[b] Isai. xix. 20.
[c] Isai. xlii. 7.
[d] Acts xii. 6—16.

power of Satan unto God[e]." But there is an expression of St. Peter's that deserves particular attention. He represents men as "called by the Gospel out of darkness into *marvellous* light[f]." And marvellous indeed it is. It is such light as not all other books in the universe can impart;—a light proceeding immediately from "the Sun of Righteousness;"—a light that exhibits every thing in its true colours; sin, in all its malignity; human nature, in all its corruption; the world, in all its vanity; yea, and God, as a reconciled God, in all his glory: "it shines into the heart, and gives the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." "The darkness being passed, and the true light shining into the heart," the soul is "delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God[g]."]

2. Of peace and joy—

[The first effect of the Gospel, or rather, of the law as preparing men for the Gospel, is, to alarm the conscience, and to make men sensible of their just desert: but the moment they embrace the promises of the Gospel, their fears are dissipated, and the whole soul is filled "with peace and joy in believing." This effect cannot be better seen than in the converts on the day of Pentecost. When they assembled in the morning, they were under the influence of every hateful and malignant passion: and, on their first conviction of their guilt, they cried out with great distress of mind, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" But, as soon as they received the Gospel into their hearts, behold, what an astonishing change was wrought; they were all penetrated with love, and peace and joy, "and ate their meat with gladness, blessing and praising God" with one heart and one soul.

What was intimated before respecting the light imparted by the Gospel, may be said also of the peace and joy which it communicates: they are truly "marvellous;" the peace is a peace that passeth all understanding," and the "joy is unspeakable and glorified." The natural man has no conception either of the one or of the other: they are such as never were, nor ever can be, derived from any other source. Some little idea of them may be formed from the exalted language in which they are depicted by the prophets. The heavens and the earth, even universal nature, are called upon to sing and shout for joy on account of that glorious redemption revealed in the Gospel[h]: and this is but a faint expression of that felicity which is the assured portion of all that believe[i].

[e] Acts xxvi. 18. [f] 1 Pet. ii. 9. [g] Rom. viii. 21.
[h] Ps. xcvi. 11—13. Isai. xliv. 23.
[i] Ps. lxxii. 6, 7. Isai. lv. 12. and xxxv. 1, 2, 5, 6, 10.

3. Of growth and stability—

[The Gospel does not merely beget souls to God, but fosters and nourishes them to their latest hour; so that they progressively advance, from "babes to young men, and fathers," in the Christian Church. Under its influence they "proceed from strength to strength, till in due time they appear before their God in Zion." Wonderful beyond all conception are the truths which it reveals to their minds; reveals, I mean, as far as they have a capacity to comprehend them. What astonishing views does it exhibit of the fulness, the excellency, the glory of Christ, and the sufficiency of the work wrought out by him! What discoveries does it give of the Divine perfections, as harmonizing and glorified in the work of redemption;—of the Divine counsels also, as planning every thing respecting it, and as infallibly accomplished in the salvation of God's elect! What views does it afford them of the Lord Jesus Christ, as having undertaken to justify his people by his blood, to sanctify them by his Spirit, and to "keep them by his own power through faith unto everlasting salvation!" These truths, brought home with power to the soul, tend to "establish, strengthen, settle it;" and to create a holy confidence in "Christ, as the Finisher, no less than the Author, of his people's faith." It is from such deep and enlarged discoveries as these that they are enabled to say, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Not that they expect the end without the means: they know that they can never attain "salvation but through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:" they know that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord:" but they know also that the grace of Christ shall be sufficient for them, and that he will "carry on and perfect in them the good work he has begun," suffering "none to pluck them out of his hands," nor any to bring them into condemnation.]

From this view of the blessings which the Gospel is intended to impart, we pass on to mark,

II. The subserviency of the ministry to the communication of them—

The Apostle felt assured that he should be an instrument to convey these blessings wherever he should go—

God had originally instituted the ministry for this very end—

[Under the law, the priest's lips were "to keep knowledge," and to impart it to all who should come to inquire of them: but under the Gospel dispensation there was an order of men appointed to go forth into all the world, and, by themselves or their successors in the ministerial office, to "preach the Gospel to every creature." This also was the end for which the Holy Spirit, in his miraculous and gracious influences, was given unto men, even to fit them for the discharge of their ministerial functions; or, in other words, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come, in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ[k]."

St. Paul too knew, by his own blessed experience, that the word, as delivered by him, had in many thousand instances produced this effect. Many Churches had been established by him: yea, in no place whatever had he been left to "run in vain or labour in vain;" he was assured, therefore, that if ever he should have the happiness of going to Rome, he should see fruits of his labours there, as well as he had done among other nations. The Church of Rome too was already well prepared to receive all his instructions, seeing that already both their faith and their obedience were so eminent as to have attracted the notice and admiration of the whole Christian world[l]. He could have no doubt, therefore, but that in such a soil, the seed which he should sow would spring up abundantly.]

The same assurance also every faithful minister may have—

[God has said, that "if we stand in his counsel, and cause his people to hear his words, we shall be the means of turning them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings[m]." True it is, we are not authorized to expect such success as was vouchsafed to the Apostle Paul: but we are assured, that, if "faithful in the discharge of our office," we shall "not run in vain, or labour in vain." God has said, "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and give bread to the eater and seed to the sower, so shall my word be, which goeth forth out of your mouth: it shall not return to me void; but it shall

[k] Eph. iv. 8, 12, 13.

[l] Rom i. 8. and xvi. 19. See particularly his high commendation of them, chap. xv. 14.

[m] Jer. xxiii. 22.

accomplish that which I please; it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it." The word is still "the rod of God's strength," the wonder-working rod, which, in whose hand soever it may be, shall alike effect the object for which it is sent, whether to the dividing of the Red Sea, or the bringing forth of water from the flinty rock. Still "it is as fire, or as the hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces:" still is it "mighty through God to the pulling down of strong-holds:" "it is sharper than any two-edged sword, and shall pierce even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and the joints and marrow." What if we be but babes in the delivery of it? God will "ordain strength in the mouth of babes and sucklings," and will shew, that the Gospel still is, no less than in the apostolic age, "the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth."

And here we will venture to make our appeal to those who hear us, Whether "the handful of corn which we have cast upon the top of these mountains has not grown up?" and, though we cannot say that "the fruit thereof shakes like the woods of Lebanon," or that converts amongst us "flourish as numerous and as beautiful as the grass of the earth[n]," yet some we have had as "seals to our ministry;" and, "though poor" in ourselves, we have been the happy instruments of "making some rich;" even richer far, than if we had imparted to them all the wealth of the whole world[o]. We quite mistake, if we suppose that any faithful minister shall be suffered to labour altogether in vain: the success of some may be small in comparison of that of others: but none shall be left wholly without witness; for our blessed Lord has expressly said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world[p]."]

May we not OBSERVE from hence—

1. What a glorious work is that of the ministry—

[A pious minister, who devotes himself wholly to his blessed work, is like a cloud, pouring down "showers of blessings" wherever he goes[q]. God by his exertions "makes manifest the *savour* of the knowledge of Christ in every place[r]," and scatters with a liberal hand "the unsearchable riches of Christ." O blessed work! what employment in the universe can be compared with it? See it described in the passage cited from Isaiah by the Saviour himself[s]: and though that passage primarily relates to him, we may apply it with perfect propriety to all who go forth in his name: and, like him, we may justly say, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled

[n] Ps. lxxii. 16. [o] 2 Cor. vi. 10. [p] Matt. xxviii. 20.
[q] Ezek. xxxiv. 26. [r] 2 Cor. ii. 14. [s] Luke iv. 18, 19.

in your ears[t]." O that all who bear this sacred character, or look forward to the assumption of it, might have a becoming sense of the dignity of their office, and live only for the profitable discharge of it! and that each in his place and station might be "a tree of life," from which multitudes may gather fruit unto life eternal[u]!]

2. What enemies to themselves are they who will not attend the ordinances of the Gospel!—

[If Paul himself should "come hither in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ," what would they be benefited, who would not come within the sound of his voice? The pool of Bethesda was endued with all its healing virtues in vain, to those who would not come and wait for the moving of the waters: nor can they be nourished by all the rich provisions of the Gospel, who will not accept the invitation to the feast. O brethren, do not be making foolish excuses: for God, who knows the state of your hearts, will put the right interpretation on your refusal; and consider your answer, not according to the mere letter of it, "I *cannot* come," but according to the spirit of it, "I *will not* come." To such contemners of God's mercy the Gospel will prove a curse, rather than a blessing: "to those to whom it is not a savour of life unto life, it will be a savour of death unto death:" and they who, "like Capernaum, have been lifted up to heaven" by the privileges they have enjoyed, "will be cast down the deeper into hell" for their abuse of them. The Lord grant that *you* may know the day of your visitation, and, "whilst ye have the light, may walk in the light, that ye may be the children of light!"]

3. What an awful responsibility attaches to those who hear the Gospel!—

[Surely every one of us should inquire, What blessings have I received from the ministration of the word? What know I of this fulness of light and liberty, of peace and joy, of growth and stability, which the Gospel is sent on purpose to communicate? Brethren, has it "come to you as yet in word only, and not in power and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance?" Unhappy people, if this be the case! Have you never read those words of the Apostle, "The earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth briers and thorns, is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned[x]?" O fearful *curse!* O, "who shall dwell with everlasting *burnings?*" Be persuaded, beloved brethren, to pray mightily to

[t] Luke iv. 21. [u] Prov. xi. 30. [x] Heb. vi. 7, 8.

God for his blessing on the word. It would be to no purpose that even "Paul should plant, or Apollos water, unless God himself give the increase." Look up to God, then, to make the word effectual for your good; and, when you are hearing it, pray to him to apply it with power to your hearts. Before you come up to the ordinances, go to the God of ordinances, and entreat of him to visit you with his salvation: and then say with yourselves, 'Now I am going to meet my God, who is coming to "bless me with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus:" Lord, "I am not straitened in thee; let me not be straitened in my own bowels:" come to me "in all the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ," and let me this day be "filled with all the fulness of God[y]."' To this prayer, in reference to every one of you, we most cordially add, "Amen and Amen."]

[y] Eph. iii. 19.

MDCCCCXXVI.

PRAYER FOR MINISTERS.

Rom. xv. 30. *I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.*

LITTLE do men imagine how great is the efficacy of intercession[a]. They seem to think it presumptuous for one man to hope that he shall prevail with God in behalf of another. And doubtless it would be presumptuous, on a supposition that the intercessor conceived he should prevail by any power or goodness of his own. But, when God has enjoined intercession as a duty, and appointed it as a means of bestowing his blessing upon men, it is highly becoming in us to obey his mandate, and to seek his blessing in his appointed way. There is no man who may not be benefited by another in this way. A beggar may bring down blessings on the greatest monarch; and a very child in grace, upon the most

[a] If this were a subject for *Trinity Sunday*, the exordium might be to this effect: We might well expect that the doctrine of the Trinity, if really true, would not merely be mentioned in two or three distinct passages of Holy Scripture, but that it would pervade the whole Scriptures, as it were, in an incidental way. And so we find it;—*e. g.* the Text.

eminent saint. St. Paul, conscious of this, frequently requested his brethren to pray for him[b]. In the passage before us, he seems to speak as if his whole welfare depended on the prayers of others; so urgent is he in his request that they would plead in his behalf at the throne of grace. In my remarks upon this request of his, I shall notice,

I. Its extreme urgency—

Language can scarcely express greater urgency than is here manifested in the Apostle's request. Observe,

1. The object of his request—

["Brethren, pray for me." He was now in peculiar circumstances. He was going up to Jerusalem, to carry to the saints there that relief which he had collected for their necessities. But the Jews there were exceedingly enraged against him, on account of his going to the Gentiles. The very saints themselves also were greatly prejudiced against him on this account: for they could not yet see that the Mosaic law was abolished; and, consequently, could not understand how he should so neglect, and discourage, the observance of it. And from this extreme irritation of all parties against him, he could not but apprehend that his life was in danger, and that his labours for the welfare of mankind would be brought to a close before he had accomplished the projects which he had formed. He therefore says, "Pray for me, that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judæa; and that my service, which I have for Jerusalem, may be accepted of the saints, that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed." In a word, he desired them to pray for the preservation of his life, the success of his labours, and the extension of his usefulness in the world. Now these are objects for which every minister needs a remembrance in the prayers of his brethren, and which justly call for their most earnest importunity in his behalf.]

2. The manner in which he urged it—

[He "besought" them: and to give the greater weight to his entreaty, he enforced it with the most powerful motives that he could possibly suggest. "I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit." Now what was there which they did not owe to the Lord Jesus Christ, who had come down from heaven for them, and

[b] Eph. vi. 19, 20. 2 Cor. i. 10, 11.

redeemed them to God by his blood? And what anxiety were they not bound to manifest for HIS interests, which are so essentially connected with the labours of his servants, and the prosperity of his Church? For HIS sake, therefore, he entreated them to intercede for them, that HIS work might be carried forward, and HIS name be glorified. "For the love of the Spirit," also, he desired their prayers. By this expression, I do not understand either their love towards the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit's love towards them. I understand him, rather, as urging them by the consideration of that love which they professed to feel towards all the members of Christ's mystical body, which was the common bond of union between them, and which was infused by the Holy Spirit into every soul wherein he dwelt. 'I understand it as though the Apostle had said, I entreat you by that "fellowship of the Spirit[c]" which ye profess, and which of necessity will manifest itself by love, shew me this greatest possible act of kindness, by interceding for me at the throne of grace.'

But the manner in which he desires them to pray is yet further remarkable, in that it breathes the very same ardour of mind as is expressed in his importunity. He intimates that he himself was extremely urgent in prayer with God for himself: and then he desires their concurrence with him in these his supplications. The term which he makes use of is taken from the contests that were maintained in the Grecian games, where every one put forth his utmost strength in order to obtain the victory. "I beseech you, *strive together with me* in your prayer to God for me:" be not content with offering a few lukewarm petitions; but wrestle with Almighty God, even as Jacob did, and rest not till you have obtained for me the desired blessings.]

To justify the Apostle in making this request, I will proceed to point out,

II. Its reasonableness—

The Apostle, from the first moment of his conversion, had lived only for God and for the souls of men—

[This appears from the history of the Church, and from all the epistles which he wrote: "He counted not his life dear to him, so that he might but finish his course with joy, and fulfil the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God."

Now, though we are far from comparing any minister of the present day with him, yet we must say, that every faithful minister, according to the grace given to him, is like-minded

[c] Phil. ii. 1.

with the Apostle in this particular. Ministers, who feel in any measure the obligations of their ordination vows, give themselves up wholly to their ministry, and wait on it as their one employment through life. They direct all their studies, and all their labours, to this one object. Allured by no hopes, deterred by no fears, discouraged by no difficulties or disappointments, onward they go, accounting the conversion of one soul an ample recompence for all that they can either do, or suffer, for the attainment of it.]

He might well, therefore, claim from them an interest in their prayers—

[Certainly the Apostle's request was reasonable in this view: and certainly every faithful minister has a right to expect the same favour at the hands of his people. It is the least that they can do for him; and, I may add, it is the greatest thing which one human being can do for another. The minister, in his exertions for his people, exposes himself to all the hostility of an ungodly world: but the people, in praying for him, transact with God alone the business in which they are engaged. For them he can only embrace such opportunities as may be afforded him after much labour, and travail, and danger: whereas they have access to God at all times, and in all places, without any other difficulty than what arises from the deadness and carnality of their own hearts. To refuse him, therefore, this mark of their love, would be base in the extreme.]

But, to enter more fully into it, I must proceed to mark,

III. Its importance—

The welfare of the Church, humanly speaking, depended on the preservation of the Apostle's life: and in like manner does it depend on the continuance and efficiency of every minister's labours. We would not magnify *ourselves,* brethren; for it would ill become us to do so: but we *may,* and *must,* "magnify our office;" and, *in this view,* we may be permitted to say, that you yourselves are interested in the welfare of your ministers. If they be truly faithful and laborious, as they ought to be, your welfare is deeply interested in,

1. The continuance of their lives—

[Doubtless God can raise up others in the place of those whom he removes. But, humanly speaking, the spiritual

prosperity of any people is intimately connected with the continuance of a pious minister amongst them. Who that sees places, where religion once flourished, now left in darkness, and immersed in all the vanities of an ungodly world, must not take up a lamentation over them, and bewail the removal of the candlestick from amongst them! We need only look to the seven Churches of Asia, in confirmation of this melancholy truth. Or perhaps we may come nearer home, and survey it in towns and villages within the sphere of our own observation. In truth, as if the labours of pious ministers were no better than a noxious pestilence, it is the aim of many to place in their room such pastors as shall defeat to the uttermost all the efforts of their lives, and bring back the people to a state of ignorance, carelessness, and indifference. I must say, therefore, that they who have profited by the labours of any minister are deeply interested in his continuance amongst them.]

2. The prosperity of their souls—

[A pious minister, if he relapse into a carnal and worldly state, will soon shew it in his ministrations. A neglect of his duties will ensue; and a lukewarmness will pervade all his labours. The people will catch his spirit, and languish together with him, and soon relapse into formality. On the other hand, if his soul flourish, there will be an unction upon his word; and it will go forth with power, and will reach the hearts of multitudes. He will be crying to God in secret, and will bring with him a blessing wherever he goes. Being blessed in his own soul, he will be a blessing to all around him. I say, then, that the people are interested, deeply interested, in the prosperity of his soul. He is a vessel in which the golden oil is treasured up; and from which it passes, in the golden pipes of ordinances, to every lamp. If he be destitute, their light will decay: if he be full, they will burn the brighter, and God will be the more glorified in them.

If, then, the people would enjoy much of God themselves, they should pray for their minister; who, under God, is the medium of communication between God and them.]

APPLICATION—

And now, methinks, I might well address to you the words of the Apostle in my own behalf—

[For surely, if not circumstanced as he was in relation to bodily dangers, we are all exposed to dangers from our great adversary, who, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour; and consequently we need, as much as ever the Apostle did, your intercessions with God, that we may be delivered from all the assaults of Satan, and be preserved

blameless to the end. Nor can our efforts, how multiplied soever they may be, produce any good effect without God's special blessing. If ever we be "mutually refreshed" by our intercourse with each other, either in public or private, it must be through the out-pouring of his Spirit upon our souls. I hope, too, that I may say, I have some claim to your good offices in this respect.]

But, waving that part of my subject, I will remind you of your obligations to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to the Holy Spirit—

[Where would you have been, if the Lord Jesus Christ had not come down from heaven to expiate you guilt, and to work out a righteousness for you by his own obedience unto death? Or what would still have been your state, if the Holy Spirit had not opened your eyes, and sealed instruction upon your souls? You would, all, without exception, have been in darkness and the shadow of death, under the guilt of all your sins, and obnoxious to the wrath of an offended God. What spark of love would you have had in your hearts to the Saviour and to the members of his mystical body, if it had not been kindled there by the Holy Spirit? And if your ears had not been opened by that Divine Agent, you would have been as deaf to the motives here urged, as if the Lord Jesus Christ and his Church had no claim upon you whatever. Then I say to you, Be sensible of your obligations to every person in the ever-blessed Trinity; and be ready to shew your gratitude and love, by every exertion in your power for the honour of your God, and for the benefit of his Church and people.]

Above all, I would call upon you to engage in prayer, with all possible earnestness, for your own souls—

[If you ought to "strive," as if you were wrestling for your life, in behalf of others, what exertions should you not make for yourselves? Be assured, it is not a few lukewarm petitions that God expects from you; nor are such addresses to the Deity at all suited to your state. You are sinners before God: you are exposed to his everlasting displeasure: you have all the powers of darkness leagued together for your destruction. It is but a little time that is allotted to you for the obtaining of mercy, and for working out your salvation: and it is by prayer alone that you can obtain deliverance from your enemies, or strength to fulfil the will of God. You must ask, if you would have; and seek, if you would find; and knock, if you would have the door of mercy opened to you. I entreat you, then, to be in earnest: yea, I beseech you, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for your own soul's sake, to strive with

God in prayer: and never to let him go, till you have obtained from him the desired blessing. Plead with him for mercy through the Redeemer's blood; plead with him for a more abundant effusion of his Spirit upon your souls; plead with him, if he have begun the good work within you, to carry it on, and perfect it to the end. Then shall all these blessings descend upon you, and God be glorified in your everlasting salvation.]

MDCCCCXXVII.

PRACTICAL WISDOM RECOMMENDED.

Rom. xvi. 19, 20. *I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.*

WHOEVER knows the perverseness of the human mind, must see that it is in vain to hope that any Church under heaven should be long free from the influence of error and contention. What St. Paul said to the elders of Ephesus, when he parted with them at Miletus, must sooner or later be addressed to all who have been long favoured with the ministry of the Gospel, that "grievous wolves will enter in among them, not sparing the flock; and that even of their ownselves will men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them[a]." The Church at Rome was as free from this spirit as any in the apostolic age. Their faith[b], and love[c], and obedience[d], were such as to render them famous through the whole Christian world, insomuch that St. Paul rejoiced greatly on their account[e]: yet he judged it necessary to caution them against "those who wished to cause divisions and offences among them[f]." In prosecution of his purpose he tells them what he wished for in their behalf, namely, that they should be wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.

In discoursing on these words, we shall point out—

I. The state of mind we should cultivate—

[a] Acts xx. 29, 30. [b] Rom. i. 8. [c] Rom. xv. 14.
[d] ver. 19. [e] ver. 19. [f] ver. 17.

Nothing is more desirable than to have our minds well regulated in reference to the concerns of religion; since by error in judgment, and indiscretion in conduct, we may do incalculable injury to others, and subject ourselves also to many calamities. We should make it our daily study to be,

1. "Wise unto that which is good"—

[It requires no little wisdom to discern in some cases what is good; for good and evil, though totally opposed to each other in matters that are clear and obvious, are sometimes so diversified in their shapes, and so doubtful in their appearances, that they may easily be mistaken for each other. Peter's concern for the welfare of his Master, had the appearance of friendship, whilst in reality it was a preferring of his Master's present welfare to the eternal welfare of the whole world; and in that view was reproved by our Lord as a demoniacal suggestion[g]. There is not any error, either in doctrine or in practice, which may not assume the semblance of truth: and to divest it of all its false colourings, requires much calm and dispassionate investigation.

In addition to the close affinity which there may be between points that are essentially different, and the consequent danger of mistaking their true qualities, there is within ourselves a propensity to lean rather to the side of error by reason of the corruption of our own hearts. There is in our fallen nature a bias towards evil, so that, however fairly we may promise in the outset, we cannot go far without feeling a drawing on one side or other from the straight line of perfect rectitude: either passion or interest is apt to creep in, and to give an undue inclination to our judgment: under their influence we take but a partial view of things, or see them in a distorted shape: in a word, we want "a single eye, which alone can cause the body to be full of light."

But a still further source of error is, that our fellow-creatures are almost universally on the side of error, and, by the countenance which they afford it, render it extremely difficult to be discovered. The spirit of the world is altogether contrary to the Spirit which is of God, so that our minds are blinded by it, and we cannot discern clearly what is of God, and what is not[h]. Besides, "there are many vain-talkers and deceivers[i]," who "lie in wait on purpose to deceive[k]," and who actually do "by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple[l]," even so far as to "subvert whole houses[m]." Against

[g] Matt. xvi. 22, 23. [h] 1 Cor. ii. 12. [i] Tit. i. 10.
[k] Eph. iv. 14. [l] ver. 18. [m] Tit. i. 11.

such persons it is extremely difficult to guard: and in order to withstand their influence, we need to have from God himself "a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and of might, a spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord, and to be made quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord[n]."]

2. "Simple concerning evil"—

[The word "simple" may be understood either as opposed to *a mixture* in our principles, or to *an offensiveness* in our conduct; both of which we should with great diligence avoid.

We *must indulge* then *no evil in ourselves:* we should have no sinister ends in view, no selfish dispositions to gratify, no personal interests to promote: there should be no allowed guile within us: we should guard to the uttermost against any mixture of principle: we should hate sin as sin, irrespective of its consequences; and determine through grace to mortify it, whatever carnal advantages such conduct may deprive us of, or whatever pains it may entail upon us.

We must be careful also to *give no encouragement to evil in others.* In no respect whatever should we encourage sin. We should not only "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but should rather reprove them:" for if we countenance sinners in any of their ways, we "make ourselves partakers of their evil deeds[o]." This is particularly inculcated in the words before our text. We should "mark those who cause divisions and offences, and should avoid them." In another place the Apostle says, we should "withdraw ourselves from them, and have no company with them, that they may be ashamed[p]." In truth, if we would "*mark*" the spirit of such persons, we should soon see how erroneous their ways must be: for they shew by their pride and conceit, their boldness and forwardness, and the constant tendency of their exertions to advance either their own interests or the interests of their party, that "they serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly." Thus the uniform endeavour of our lives should be, as our Lord has taught us, to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves[q]."]

That we may the more earnestly cultivate this spirit, let us consider,

II. Our encouragement to live in the exercise of it—

The evils against which we would guard you arise in great measure from the agency of Satan—

[It was Satan who "beguiled Eve" in Paradise: and from that time has he been incessantly occupied in deceiving the

[n] Isai. xi. 2, 3.
[o] 2 John, ver. 11.
[p] 2 Thess. iii. 6, 14.
[q] Matt. x. 16.

children of men. The bad are wholly under his influence: he inspired the four hundred prophets of Baal to deceive Ahab to his ruin[r]: and both Judas and Ananias were actuated by him to perpetrate the crimes which they respectively committed. But even good men are also wrought upon by him on some occasions, as has already appeared in the case of Peter, and as is intimated in the cautions given by St. Paul both to the Corinthian and Thessalonian Churches[s]. Satan can easily assume the appearance of an angel of light, and can enable "his ministers to appear as ministers of righteousness[t]." Hence arises a necessity to be always on our guard against his devices.]

But his influence shall soon be destroyed—

[It was foretold in the very first promise, that the "Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." And this has been fulfilled by our Lord Jesus Christ, who, even whilst he was yet alive, declared, that, "the prince of this world was judged," and "cast out;" and who "by death overcame him utterly," and whilst yet upon the cross "spoiled all the principalities and powers of darkness." Afterwards, in his resurrection, he completed his triumph over Satan, "leading captivity itself captive." And as he has thus vanquished him *for* us, so will he also overcome him *in* us, enabling us to "resist him till he flees from us," and finally to "bruise him under our feet." Soon shall he cease to harass us. We have but a little time more to conflict with him. The victory is assured to us; and his doom is sealed. The time is near at hand, when all the judgments which he seeks to bring on us shall fall upon his own head; and we whom he now labours to devour shall sit in judgment upon him, and, as assessors with the Lord Jesus Christ, shall declare and confirm the sentence that shall be executed upon him to all eternity[u].]

And this is a great encouragement to us to maintain the conflict in the way before prescribed—

[Were the contest to be of any long duration, we might be discouraged, just as the Israelites in the wilderness were, at the length of the way[x]. But "it is but a little time, and He who shall come, will come, and will not tarry[y]." Methinks, already has Satan received his death wound, so that we have but to follow up the victory already gained. Already is he, like the five kings of the Amorites when shut up in the cave, doomed to certain death: and soon, like them, shall he be

[r] 1 Kings xxii. 19—23.
[s] 2 Cor. xi. 3. 2 Thess. iii. 5.
[t] 2 Cor. xi. 13—15.
[u] 1 Cor. vi. 3.
[x] Numb. xxi. 4.
[y] Heb. x. 37.

brought forth for execution, and the feet of all the children of Israel be put upon his neck. Yes, he is already a vanquished enemy; and in a little time shall our conflicts be followed with complete success. Like the redeemed Israelites, we shall see all the enemies that affrighted us, dead upon the sea-shore.]

APPLICATION—

Are any of you unconscious of the difficulty of stemming the torrent?

[It only shews that you are carried down with the stream. The generality are "wise to do evil, but to do good have no knowledge[a]." To become the very reverse of this is no easy matter: and if ever you be brought to a truly Christian state, you shall know the difference between floating with the stream and swimming against it.]

Are any of you discouraged by reason of the difficulties which you have to contend with?

["Encourage yourselves in the Lord your God." Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. He has pledged himself, that "neither angels nor principalities nor powers shall ever separate you from his love;" and "what he hath promised he is able also to perform." Millions who were once as weak as you have already triumphed over Satan and all his hosts, having "overcome him by the blood of the Lamb." That same blood shall prevail for you: and ere long shall you also bear the palm of victory, and sing for ever the triumphs of redeeming love.]

[a] Jer. iv. 22.

MDCCCCXXVIII.

VICTORY OVER SATAN.

Rom. xvi. 20. *The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.*

IN order to get forward in our Christian course, we must unite a strenuous exertion of our own powers with an humble dependence on the Divine aid. We cannot work without God; and God will not work without us: but if we look to him for assistance, and yet labour in a diligent and prudent way, he will succour us with his almighty power, and "perfect that

which concerneth us." St. Paul, cautioning the Christians at Rome against those who caused divisions and offences, exhorts them to cultivate that wisdom of the serpent and that harmlessness of the dove, which would serve to counteract their efforts: yet for their final success he directs their eyes to God, through whose co-operation alone they could maintain their integrity, and in whose strength they should eventually overcome. In discoursing on his words, we shall consider,

I. The promise which God has here given to the Church—

Satan is an active and powerful adversary to God's people—

[His exertions are directed against *the Church at large*, and against *every individual* member of it. Indefatigable are his exertions in causing dissensions and divisions among the various societies of Christians, embittering them one against another, or sowing discord among themselves. And though these feuds may be considered as arising from the turbulence and pride of men, yet must they also be referred to Satan as their original author; since it is he who instigates the professors of religion, as well as others, to the commission of sin[a]. Much of carnal contention prevailed in the Church of Corinth; and *that* the Apostle repeatedly ascribes to Satan: he calls the authors of it "*his* ministers," and puts the members of that Church on their guard, "lest the serpent, who beguiled Eve through his subtlety, should corrupt them from the simplicity of Christ[b]." He tells them how ready Satan was to take advantage of them in the matter of the incestuous man[c]; and in general, whatever evils occur in the Church, he traces them up to Satan's temptations as their proper source[d]. Nor is there any individual among the Lord's people, whom that wicked one does not endeavour to harass and destroy. It was he who stirred up David to number the people[e]: it was he who influenced Peter to deny his Lord with oaths and curses[f]: and, who can tell to what straits he would have reduced the Apostle Paul by his buffetings, if that holy man had not obtained timely succour from his Lord[g]? Indeed, if he had the effrontery and the malice to assault even our Lord himself, and if he repeatedly reduced even him to such a state as that he needed to

[a] This is intimated in the context. Compare ver. 17, 20.
[b] 2 Cor. xi. 3, 15. [c] 2 Cor. ii. 11. [d] 1 Thess. iii. 5.
[e] 1 Chron. xxi. 1. [f] Luke xxii. 31. [g] 2 Cor. xii. 7—9.

be strengthened by an angel from heaven[h], well may we suppose that he will not suffer *us* to pass unmolested and unassailed.]

But God has promised to "bruise him under our feet"—

[God is "the God of peace" primarily as being reconciled to us through the death of his Son: but he has this name assigned to him in our text chiefly as delighting in the social order and the personal happiness of his people. In this view he enters the lists against our great adversary, and undertakes to subdue him for us. Already has he given us an earnest of our triumph in enabling his Son to "bruise that serpent's head" upon the cross[i]; and it is a very short time that that wicked one shall retain the present remnant of his power. Though permitted to fight against us, his rage is overruled for the benefit of the saints and the glory of God: and, as when he possessed the bodies of men, his malice always terminated in his own confusion, so, in every instance, shall he be foiled in his endeavours to destroy the souls that belong to Christ. He is even now a vanquished enemy[k]; and soon shall the very weakest believer trample on him, as Joshua trampled on the necks of the kings of Canaan[l].]

If we desire this mercy at the hands of God, we shall be glad to know,

II. The way in which we may expect him to accomplish it—

However various his dealings may be with different persons in some minute particulars, there are general rules which he will observe towards all:

1. He will increase the triumphs of his people over Satan in this world—

[Satan gains great advantage over young Christians by means of their unsubdued corruptions, and their inexperience in the spiritual warfare. To defeat his malignant efforts, God increases the strength of his people, and gives them a deeper insight into the devices of their enemy. He clothes them with divine armour, and teaches them how to use the sword of the Spirit, and the shield of faith[m]. By exercise he renders them expert soldiers, and enables them to "war a good warfare." Instead of exposing themselves needlessly to danger, they are now taught to "watch and be sober;" instead of indulging a vain conceit of their own purity and strength, they are led to

[h] Matt. iv. 11. and Luke xxii. 43.
[i] Gen. iii. 15. and Col. ii. 15.
[k] John xii. 31.
[l] Josh. x. 24.
[m] Eph. vi. 13—17.

suspect the treachery of their own hearts, and to depend more simply on the grace of Christ. Thus they learn to fight a good fight; and, though sometimes wounded by his fiery darts, they "resist their enemy till he flees from them[n]."]

2. He will give them a complete and everlasting victory over him in the world to come—

[While they are in the flesh Satan will renew his assaults upon them. There is no place so sacred, but he will intrude into it; nor any person so holy, but he will seek to destroy him. When the sons of Job were assembled before the Lord, Satan came also in the midst of them[o]: and when Joshua stood in the Divine presence, the same wicked fiend stood at his right hand to resist him[p]: nor will he suspend his attacks even when we are bowing our knees at the throne of grace, or assembled around the table of the Lord. But into heaven he can never enter: there we shall be lodged in perfect safety: thence we may deride his impotent attempts, and rejoice over him as a captive foe.

But it may be said, That we rather escape from him, than triumph over him: for that he still continues master of the field. We answer, No: for he shall in due time be dragged in chains of darkness into our very presence; and, as assessors with Christ in judgment, we shall judge him and all his angels[q]. We shall confirm the sentence passed upon him; and add our hearty Amen to the curse that dooms him to eternal fire.]

INFER—

1. How great and precious are the promises of God!—

[To those who know nothing of the Christian warfare, this promise will afford but little satisfaction: but to those who have been long conflicting with the powers of darkness, it will be a ground of inexpressible joy and thankfulness. Such an assurance of victory will revive their drooping spirits, and reanimate them for the combat: nor will they be averse to maintain the contest as long as God shall see fit to try their faith and patience: having this word, they want no more: "they know in whom they have believed;" and that, though now their hands hang down and their hearts are faint, they shall soon make heaven itself to echo with their shouts of victory[r]. O that all might have an interest in this promise, and experience its completion in the realms of bliss!]

[n] Jam. iv. 7. [o] Job. ii. 1. [p] Zech. iii. 1. [q] 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3.

[r] Here might be a *personal* address to those who are assaulted with temptations of any kind, urging them to combine holy vigilance with a steadfast faith. 1 Pet. v. 8, 9.

2. How much are we concerned to obtain peace with God!—

[It is to those only who are reconciled to God that the promise in the text is made. If we have never yet obtained mercy at his hands through the blood of Jesus, we shall in vain hope to conquer this cruel adversary. God, so far from interposing for us, will give us into his hands; and, instead of fighting for us as a friend, will himself be our enemy. Miserable indeed shall we then be; for, if we cannot contend with Satan, how shall we be able to withstand Jehovah? "Will our hands be strong in the day that HE shall deal with us, or can we thunder with a voice like his?" Let us then seek reconciliation with him;——— so shall he be a "God of peace" to us, and secure us victory in the day of battle.]

END OF VOL. XV.

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